

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

National Center for the Laity
PO Box 291102
Chicago, IL 60629

www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm

January
2012

Number
198

50 Years since Vatican II

“There is a danger that the Church—in response to what it sees as consumerism, relativism and its on-going public relations nightmares—will retreat from engagement [with the world] to discipline and compliance and [thereby] risk losing a generation,” says John Fontana (Arrupe Program in Social Ethics for Business, Woodstock Theological Center, Box 571137, Washington, DC 20057).

The Church’s defensive and inward-looking posture is surprising to Fontana. After all, Vatican II (1962-1965) turned the entire church in a positive direction, “away from a dualistic split of church/world towards an understanding that there is *one world* and God is present in it.” According to Vatican II, “God calls us, as laity, into the world through work and relational life and our task as laity is to transform the world in light of Gospel values.”

The timing for Vatican II’s theology is right, Fontana concludes. In the new economy young workers are looking for meaning in their careers and for humanistic, even spiritual, business ventures. “Human resource departments are paying attention to programs that encourage leadership, teamwork and collaboration to sustain the human spirit...Corporations now create mission statements. They reflect at corporate retreats.” Business is interested in ethics and environmental sustainability. The Academy of Management, for example, has an entire section on spirituality and work, Fontana notes.

How can the church avoid missing an opportunity? What can be done to attract and retain young adult workers to our faith? Please send specific anecdotes or descriptions of outward-looking programs to INITIATIVES.

Taking the Initiative

For Business Leaders

Each year *The Catholic Spirit* (244 Dayton Ave. #2, St. Paul, MN 55102) bestows Leading With Faith awards to area businesspeople in three categories: large

business, small business and non-profit. The awardees are invited to a dinner and are featured in a 16-page special section of the newspaper.

Larry LeJeune (LeJeune Investment, 9393 Wayzata Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55426; <http://liinc.net>), owner of four automobile dealerships, is a 2011 winner. In a previous manufacturing venture LeJeune faced a crisis. He called the entire workforce together: “We’re cutting everyone’s salary by 5% and the officers by 10% and my salary by 25%.” If we turn things around, he promised, everyone gets paid back. “I did pay them all back.” He learned to value employees and, in turn, expects them to take extra steps for each customer.

John LeBlanc (St. Therese, 8000 Bass Lake Rd., New Hope, MN 55428; www.sttheresemn.org) manages two senior citizen complexes. He builds quality into the daily routine of his staff. Not satisfied with normal nursing home equipment, LeBlanc does extra fundraising to obtain special rehab apparatus.

Jackie Gibney (Jacobs Marketing, 12935 16th Ave. N, Plymouth, MN 55441; www.jacobsmarketing.com) brokers contacts between small suppliers and large retail outlets, primarily Target. She consistently presents the products with honesty to the retailer and likewise the retailer’s expectations to the supplier. Her company recently had an opportunity to gain a significant client, but one who had a product similar to another of her clients—albeit a small one. Out of loyalty Gibney declined the opportunity.

The Leading With Faith winners have commonalities:

- They do not use *churchy* language or religious parlance in regard to work—probably for the better.
- They have integrated lives; they are the same at home, in the community and on the job.
- They are nearly all involved in charitable activity—serving on boards, donating money and volunteering time.

It is easy to criticize business—especially in the wake of recent financial scandals. It is important, however, to devise forums like *The*

Catholic Spirit's Leading With Faith that lift up the Christian vocation of business leader—with no pretense of softening up a businessperson for a donation.

Further, the whole church has to develop a theology of business. Even considering the social encyclicals, Catholicism “has no analysis of the moral exercise of self-interest in markets,” writes Dan Finn of St. John’s University in *Commonweal* (475 Riverside Dr. #405, New York, NY 10115; 12/2/11). A few people have sketched such a theology. Unfortunately, the best-known among them to date are “driven by a determination to [simply] endorse markets, cherry-picking the Catholic tradition for theological support,” Finn concludes.

Taking the Initiative

As Consumers

“By almost any measure, the last five years have seen a staggering growth in ethical consumption,” says Dara O’Rourke, a founder of Good Guide (www.goodguide.com). The concept *ethical consumption* “covers a wide range of issues and agendas” and includes multiple tactics like boycotts, creating demand for specific products (as in the fair trade movement), shareholder resolutions or simply favoring local companies, farmers and brewers. Although “ethical consumption does not crowd out government regulation,” companies are often more responsive to consumer dollars than to laws, O’Rourke concludes.

O’Rourke’s Good Guide is a cyber-tool that rates 120,000 products on a one-to-ten scale. A person can search under categories like *cars* or *appliances*. Or the search can be for a specific company or brand name product. A person’s criteria (climate, labor, nutrition and more) can also be factored into the rating.

Boston Review (PO Box 425786, Boston, MA 02142; 12/11) includes nine replies to O’Rourke’s overview of ethical consumption.

Scott Nova (Worker Rights Consortium, 5 Thomas Ave. NW #500, Washington, DC 20005; www.workerrights.org), among others, is concerned about monitoring the behavior of so-called ethical companies. Especially in the apparel industry, a company sometimes claims to be ethical while allowing sweatshops and child labor among its subcontractors. He (and other *Boston Review* contributors) recommends Alta Gracia (5475 Blackstock Rd., Spantenburg, SC

29303; www.altagraciaapparel.com), sports apparel firm that honors workers.

Auret van Heerden (Fair Labor Association, 1111 19th St. MW #401, Washington, DC 20036; www.fairlabor.org) says that the ethical consumption movement is so awash in information and scorecards that an individual is easily overwhelmed and loses interest.

Juliet Schor of Boston College develops van Heerden’s point, saying isolated consumers do not predictably act on their ethical information. The movement is effective when people are simultaneously consumers and activists—particularly when they are positively or negatively focused on a company, not on random products.

With that, INITIATIVES reports that the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (PO Box 603, Immokalee, FL 34143; www.ciw-online.org) wants pressure on Trader Joe’s (800 S. Shamrock Ave., Pasadena, CA 91016; www.traderjoes.com) until it agrees to the Fair Food Code of Conduct.

The goal is to get an additional penny per pound for migrants picking tomatoes. Taco Bell, McDonald’s, Burger King and several others (each after a targeted campaign) now require their subcontractors to abide by the code.

Trader Joe’s claims that it already adheres to the standards but CIW says, “Trust but verify.” CIW has no way to monitor the pay scales used by Trader Joe’s.

Lucas Benitez, a CIW founder, was recently selected as one of 15 people making a difference by *Yes!* magazine (284 Madrona Way NE #116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110; Winter/12).

To keep current on topics of migrant labor, contact National Catholic Rural Life Conference (4625 Beaver Ave., Des Moines, IA 50310; www.ncrlc.com) and National Farm Worker Ministry (438 N. Skinner Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63130; www.nfwm.org).

Taking the Initiative

Assisting the Unemployed

Howard Schultz (Starbucks, 204 Utah Ave., Seattle, WA 98134) is fed up with our government’s meager response to unemployment. He invited some employees to his home for brainstorming, reports Joe Nocera. The result is Create Jobs for USA Fund.

Here's the plan: Starbucks Foundation starts it rolling with a \$5million donation and, along with the company, it absorbs all administrative costs. Starbucks' customers then donate \$5, for which they get a wristband. The money goes to a leveraged fund managed by Opportunity Finance Network (620 Chestnut St. #572, Philadelphia, PA 19106; www.opportunityfinance.net). OFN, in turn, makes loans through several private community development groups that assist affordable housing ventures, small businesses and other companies that hire the unemployed. Applications and more information are on the OFN website.

Schultz meanwhile is contacting other major retailers, asking them to allow their customers to join the Create Jobs effort. (*N.Y. Times*, 10/18/11)

Are there other examples of employers (maybe those less well known than Starbucks) that are taking the initiative to create jobs?

Meanwhile, Timothy Mullner of Minnesota is making the rounds of local unemployed support groups. He talks about his book, *A Spiritual Guide To the Unemployed* (Liguori Publications [2011], 1 Liguori Dr., Liguori, MO 63057; \$10.99). Mullen was fired from a vice-president's job. During his 15-month search, he sold his home and moved in with friends. The book is a mix of advice, poems, prayers and thought questions. (*The Catholic Spirit*, 11/23/11)

Many of the church-based unemployed groups in Minnesota cooperate with one another. A partial list of them includes Easter Lutheran Church (4200 Pilot Knob Rd., Eagan, MN 55122) which meets 7:30-9 A.M. on Tuesdays; Epiphany Church (1900 11th Ave., Coon Rapids, MN 55433) which meets Tuesdays, 6:30-8:30 P.M.; Basilica of St. Mary (PO Box 50010, Minneapolis, MN 55405); and St. Peter Claver (1060 W. Central Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104).

Jim Doyle, veteran Catholic newspaper columnist, has not forsaken the possibility that Congress might yet improve "the economy, health and good humor" of our country. Thus, he has formulated a few planks for "Doyle's New Deal." (*Catholic New York*, 11/17/11)

- In their 70th year, people get a 1% reduction in their tax bill; a 2% reduction in their 71st year and so on. Married couples get 2% in the 70th and 4% in the 71st and so on.

- In the Doyle Plan there is "an increasing deduction" for all veterans and for anyone formerly in a national volunteer corps.
- Save more, pay less tax. "This runs counter to current [consumer] philosophy," Doyle admits. But it contributes to economic reserves.
- A tax credit certificate is given each time a person votes.
- More tax consideration for families with college students, including those in community colleges.

In coming months Doyle will expand his list. Any creative suggestions?

Taking the Initiative In Labor Relations

The administration at St. Xavier University (3700 W. 103rd St., Chicago, IL 60655; www.sxu.edu) recently asserted that it operates with a Catholic identity. Who would think otherwise of a school named after a saint, affiliated with the Mercy Sisters and sharing a campus with two Catholic high schools and a motherhouse? But the assertion was followed by a puzzling corollary. The administrators went on to say that a Catholic institution does not have to abide by the procedures of the National Labor Relations Bureau; that St. Xavier can deny its part-time teachers the opportunity to vote for or against a union. All the more puzzling because the full-time faculty at St. Xavier is already in a union.

This is why the teachers invited your INITIATIVES' editor to speak on campus. Drawing upon the booklet *Catholic Administrators and Labor Unions* (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$3), I explained that Catholic doctrine does not endorse one union over another; does not say a particular union is a good or bad fit for a particular institution; does not vouch for the character of any one union official or member; nor recommend one workers' tactic over another in a given situation. It simply says that workers at a company or institution have the competence to make a decision for or against a union without the maternal or paternal influence of their employer.

Further, Catholic doctrine does not say that every business must have a union. Simply,

in the words of Pope John Paul II (1920-2005), that “unions are indispensable in human society.”

Your INITIATIVES’ editor has a feeling that the St. Xavier administration will soon honor their Catholic identity because in the years before and after Vatican II the Mercy Sisters in Chicago were in the forefront of social justice; and years before that the Mercy Sisters gave your editor a great gift: They taught me how to read.

To keep current with this and similar stories connect with the cyber-group Catholic Labor Network (1500 Jefferson Dr., Port Arthur, TX 77642; www.catholiclabor.org). CLN’s Clayton Sinyai staffs its Catholic Employer Project. Among other information, he names over 100 U.S. Catholic institutions that harmoniously negotiate with employee unions.

Taking the Initiative *For Sabbath Time*

Hobby Lobby (7707 SW 44th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73179; www.hobbylobby.com) is likely the only tenant in a mall that is closed on Sunday. The company believes its workers deserve a designated day to worship and relax.

Chick-fil-A (5200 Buffington Rd., Atlanta, GA 30349; www.chick-a-fil.com), the popular fast food chain featuring chicken sandwiches, is also closed on Sundays. The policy is not explicitly related to religion, but founder Truett Cathy believes the chain is successful precisely because it honors the need for rest and reflection. (*The Marketplace* [6/11], 532 N. Oliver Rd., Newton, KS 67114)

“Leisure is an attitude of mind and a condition of the soul that fosters the capacity to perceive the reality of the world,” writes Josef Pieper in *Leisure: the Basis of Culture* (Ignatius Press [1952], 1348 10th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94122; \$11.86). Today, “total labor has vanquished leisure. Unless we regain the art of silence and insight, the ability for non-activity, unless we substitute true leisure for our hectic amusements, we will destroy our culture and ourselves. Culture depends for its very existence on leisure. And leisure, in turn, is not possible unless it has a durable, living link with divine worship.”

Taking the Initiative *For Marriage*

Our U.S. Catholic bishops (USCCB, 3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017; www.foryourmarriage.org) have a new, comprehensive website “for strengthening, promoting and protecting marriage.” It includes prayers, dating tips, a quiz or two, links to over 40 enrichment programs, a bibliography of marriage handbooks, links to dating websites and more.

The challenge is formidable. One attractive website, as the bishops realize, will help only minimally.

A 12,000-word essay in *The Atlantic* (600 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20037; 11/11), “All the Single Ladies” by Kate Bolick, is getting reaction in newspapers and on blogs. It is a blend of Bolick’s personal experience, a review of social science, plus interviews with experts and others on the state of dating and marriage.

“We are without a doubt in the midst of an extraordinary sea change,” Stephanie Coontz tells Bolick. Coontz surveys the cultures of marriage past and present in *Marriage: A History* (Penguin [2006], 375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014; \$17). The current “transformation is momentous—immensely liberating and immensely scary.”

Those who marry, do so later. Among those 18-29, only 22% are now married. The most significant change in the past 15 years is the decline in the total marriage rate. Now slightly over 50% of adults are not married.

Drawing on an earlier article in *The Atlantic* (8/10), “The End of Men” by Hanna Rosin, Bolick explains that quality working-class men are in shorter supply because of their employment prospects. College educated men don’t make commitments, while college educated women are not motivated to marry simply to share a husband’s income.

Coontz keys in on *the marriage gap*. Even though the college educated delay marriage, they still use the institution. The lowest marriage rate is among those lacking a college education. (*Christian Science Monitor*, 2/14/11)

The trends suggest to INITIATIVES that to effectively support marriage the whole church (bishops and laity) ought to increase their support for Catholic high schools and to assist our Catholic colleges in retaining students,

particularly children of immigrants and the working-class.

Work and Art

“To bear witness [to people in unguarded moments] is both a privilege and a burden,” reflects Dmitry Samarov in *Hack: Stories from a Chicago Cab* (University of Chicago Press [2011], 1427 E. 60th St., Chicago, IL 60637; \$20).

Samarov earned a degree from Chicago’s School of the Art Institute. Then, like most artists, he needed a job to support his vocation. Driving a cab was a good fit, says Samarov, because his style of painting involves “looking out the window at the surrounding world.” Thus “rolling around the streets” is a plus.

As time went by, Samarov launched a cyber-gallery (www.dmitrysamarov.com) and a blog (<http://chicagohack.com>) with sketches, most in black-and white, and with written observations about urban characters he meets. The book, *Hack*, followed. It too is a mix of sketches and text.

The type of passenger changes from early week to late week and from morning to evening. They are in work-mode in the morning, uninterested in conversation. There is more interaction later in the day and a post-party mirth or slumber at night. Samarov describes a trouble-free New Year’s Eve—no one sick in the cab. But he wonders if the party goes “were all going through the motions, doing all this out of custom rather than any true feeling of elation. Grimly pushing toward dawn.”

He observes that several passengers make disparaging remarks about other cabbies who are foreign-born or black. Yet, as Samarov points out, he came to the U.S. as a youngster from the then Soviet Union. So why spout off to him? He also says the managers in the cab station talk condescendingly to drivers. Yet, Samarov expresses “unqualified thanks” to specific cab companies “for renting me the vehicles that provided the setting for these stories.”

Hack concludes with some passenger one-liners. There was the drunken woman who told him to take her “to the Hotel Allegory.” And the passenger who felt it necessary to say: “We were only friends when she was into irony.”

120+ Years

Of Catholic Social Thought

The U.S. bishops’ pastoral letter on the economy, “remains an important and valuable resource” 25 years after its publication, writes David O’Brien in *Commonweal* (475 Riverside Dr. #405, New York, NY 10115; 11/18/11). It deserves a second look as our country faces its “most serious economic crisis since the Great Depression, at a time when Americans yearn for a positive vision of the economy that can support struggling families, restrain private greed, and provide resources for enriching the common life.”

It took the bishops over six years to produce *Economic Justice for All*. Their process, in which the National Center for the Laity participated, included consultations, public hearings and drafts for comment. Yet, says O’Brien, the document and its process also marked the end of an era.

O’Brien mentions factors that influenced the reception of *Economic Justice for All*—factors that pertain to Catholicism today. One in particular caught NCL’s attention.

“The bishops failed to explore in any depth the role of the laity” for implementing Catholic teaching, O’Brien asserts. In an early draft the bishops wrote about the lay vocation in the workplace. But “most of this language was [eventually] eliminated.” Instead, mention of the laity in the final version mostly worries “about maintaining proper religious values amid rampant materialism and consumerism,” says O’Brien.

That is, it is easy to denounce the many and serious defects in the economy and the culture. It is another thing for the whole church to nourish personal relationships among informed and confident laity who incrementally advance peace and justice inside their workaday institutions.

O’Brien’s reflection echoes NCL’s charter of 1977, *A Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern*, says Vaile Scott, former NCL president. Catholic teaching rings hollow, the *Declaration* says, unless there is a sense of vocation among “the laity who spend most of their time and energy in the professional and occupational world.”

Supporting hundreds and hundreds of specific lay people ought to be a priority, says Scott. They are the ones who “search out opportunities to organize within workplaces,

professions and neighborhoods; thus improving the world. The institutional Church has not shown sustained interest in nurturing this mission with clarity and enthusiasm.”

The 1986 pastoral, *Economic Justice for All*, can be obtained from USCCB Publishing (3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017; \$14.95 or download from www.osjspm.org). Its best section, in NCL’s opinion, is near the conclusion: “The Christian Vocation in the World Today.” Find there paragraphs on “the call to holiness in the world” and on the relationship between liturgy and justice.

NCL used the 1986 document to launch a support group, Business Executives for Economic Justice. The first meeting in 1987 was held at the Chicago Board of Trade. Several CEOs participated, including the archbishop of Chicago and a bishop from Ohio and another from Wisconsin.

Rest in Peace

Marty Hegarty (1928-2001)

To the criteria for righteous sheep in *Matthew 25* could be added: “I was unemployed and you found me a job.” By that criterion, Hegarty superbly inherits the kingdom prepared for him since the foundation of the world.

In 1970 Hegarty began an effort to assist resigned priests find new careers. With his friend Jim Wilbur he founded WEORC (426 N. Waiola, LaGrange Park, IL 60526; <http://weorc.blogspot.com>) through which at least 1,000 priests and religious found new jobs. The organization is also a support network that hosts retreats, circulates material and sponsors a dinner. Hegarty also successfully lobbied some diocesan and religious pension funds for a policy on partial payments to resigned priests.

Hegarty, who was ordained for Chicago in 1954, was an industrial psychologist after he resigned. With his wife Carole he was a supporter of many organizations, including the National Center for the Laity. Hegarty also holds a Chicago record for attending the most Catholic funerals—a corporal work of mercy.

Happenings

The annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering (USCCB Justice and Peace, 3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017; www.usccb.org) is February 12-15, 2012 in Washington. Speakers include PBS commentators David Brooks and Mark Shields, plus Carolyn Woo, the new director of Catholic Relief Services and John Carr of the U.S. bishops' conference. About 20 institutions, several affiliated with the bishops, sponsor this event. Among the independent sponsors is Catholic Labor Network (1500 Jefferson Dr., Port Arthur, TX 77642; www.catholiclabor.org).

"Light of the Nations: Reflecting on Vatican II" is a March 3, 2012 symposium at Benedictine University (5700 College Rd., Lisle, IL 60532; www.ben.edu/vatican). In conjunction with the event the school's University Ministry is conducting an essay contest for both high school and college students. The essay responds to: "Why did Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) convene the Second Vatican Council?" Six winners get a scholarship. All essay contestants are invited to a symposium dinner.

Fr. J. Michael Byron will offer March 8, 2012 breakfast reflections on "Faith and Work: Convergence and Conversion" at St. Olaf Church (215 S. Eighth Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55402; www.saintolaf.org). This event is one in a series cosponsored with John A. Ryan Institute (2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105; www.stthomas.edu).

Villanova University (Villanova, PA 19085; www1.villanova.edu/mission) hosts a March 19-20, 2012 conference, "Catholic Social Teaching and Human Rights." Speakers will include Fr. David Hollenbach, SJ of Boston College and Jane Kani Edward of Fordham University, who will talk about Southern Sudan.

An international Conference on "Catholic Social Thought and Management Education" will be held at University of Dayton, June 18-20, 2012. The secretariat for the event is the John A. Ryan Institute (2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105; www.stthomas.edu/dayton). Five business schools and other institutions are sponsors.

INITIATIVES

www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm

Published eight or nine times per year by
National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629

Editor: Bill Droel (wdroel@cs.com). Follow Droel's blog, *The Working Catholic*, on www.chicagocatholicnews.com. His 30+ year bi-weekly column, *View from the Hill*, is posted at www.mvccglacier.com.

Fr. Sinclair Oubre (Catholic Labor Network, 1500 Jefferson Dr., Port Arthur, TX 77642; www.catholiclabor.org) hosts the web version of INITIATIVES at www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm.

Board Members of NCL include Tom Donnelly, Bill Droel, John Hazard, Phil Moore, Terry Mambu Rasch, Lauren Sukal, Frosty Pipal and Vaile Scott.

NCL is a 501-C-3 organization, supported entirely by donations. If you missed NCL's annual appeal letter of Advent 2011, you can now donate using the form on the back page. Obviously, postage and printing costs increase regularly. Please respond as best as you are able.

Permission to reprint INITIATIVES' items is granted. Please give proper credit.