

<h1>Initiatives</h1> <p>In Support of Christians in the World</p>	<p>National Center for the Laity PO Box 291102 Chicago, IL 60629 www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm</p>	<p>June 2008</p> <p>Number 172</p>
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NCL's 30th Anniversary

Our National Center for the Laity, originally a secretariat for the Advent 1977 *Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern*, celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. The NCL helps Catholics and our ecumenical friends understand and implement the central thrust of Vatican II (1963-1965): that the church is the people of God in service to the modern world of work, neighborhood and family life.

Several books in recent months present the history and teaching of Vatican II.

Vatican II: A Sociological Analysis of Religious Change by Melissa Wilde (Princeton University Press [2007], 41 William St., Princeton, NJ 08540; \$35) is fascinating because it puts flesh and bones on all the brainy substance of the theological interpretations. Her analysis of what transpired after the October 13, 1962 opening assembly of 2,500 bishops in St. Peter's documents how change occurs. Within weeks of the opening a group of bishops "snatched the ball," from the Roman Curia (the Vatican version of *city hall*) and for all practical purposes didn't give it up. When Vatican II concluded on December 8, 1965, the church was turned "on its head."

How did it happen? The majority of bishops were not scholars; they were pastoral leaders and administrators of dioceses. Thus, they brought a wealth of experience to Vatican II; they listened not only to the scholars and theologians, but also to the Holy Spirit. And they learned how to organize. They did not all agree. Bishops from different parts of the world had diverse and often conflicting points of view on issues. For instance, among the progressives from Northern Europe and North America were bearers of a new liberalism, favoring dialogue with Protestants, separation of church and state and religious liberty. The bishops from Latin America were focused on poverty and progressive theology, but were leery of ecumenism because of missionary evangelicals in their midst. The African bishops on the other hand were more dedicated to missionary efforts. The only conservative block of bishops came from Western Europe, especially from Italy,

Spain, Ireland, and Portugal. This conservative block (about 15% of the voting bishops) controlled *city hall*.

Bishops then and now are organized into Episcopal Conferences generally along national lines. With encouragement from Bishop Helder Camara from Latin America, the Vatican II bishops decided to form international discussion groups. Each "group came to be named after the hotel where they met weekly," Wilde explains. The Domus Mariae (House of Mary, DM) quickly became a key part of the progressive organization and the ultimate outcome of the Council.

An anecdote about one bishop captures how Vatican II was personal and relevant to many Catholics who observed it from afar. Bishop Ernest Primeau of Manchester was chosen to be the representative from North America at DM. Primeau was previously a Chicago priest, pastor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel (690 W. Belmont Ave., Chicago, IL 60657). He was the host of one of the Catholic Adult Education Centers (a forerunner of our National Center for the Laity). Primeau remained in touch with Chicago all during Vatican II. Wilde quotes him: "Contact with the bishops of the world has widened my horizons, made me more appreciative of the ideas and problems of others, more sensitive to their needs, spiritual and material... Before collegiality [was formally approved by Vatican II] I had already profoundly experienced [it]."

INITIATIVES will continue to look back at Vatican II and look ahead at lay initiatives in the U.S. during this 30th anniversary for the NCL.

Taking the Initiative

For the Environment

The environment has been viewed as an elite interest, a low priority for struggling workers. More specifically, unions like the Teamsters and the United Auto Workers oppose some pro-environment measures because they fear, for example, that stricter emissions standards will result in a loss of jobs.

It is an interesting development then when the United Steelworkers and the Sierra Club (85 Second St. #200, San Francisco, CA 94105; www.sierraclub.org) team up for a Blue-Green Alliance dedicated to creating blue-collar jobs through green investment in manufacturing and installing of solar panels, wind turbines, insulating material and more. (*N.Y. Times*, 6/8/06)

The Alliance, with the help of Renewable Energy Policy Project (1612 K St. NW #202, Washington, DC 20006; www.repp.org), conducts a study of an area's economy and its renewable energy potential. In Minnesota, for example, the Alliance estimates 9,000 jobs can be created in wind energy and an equal number in biomass, geothermal and solar energy. The Alliance then campaigns in a selected area for governmental and private-sector allies. (*Union Advocate* [3/7/08], 411 Main St., St. Paul, MN 55102)

Of course, the green agenda, including its technology and its jobs, is viable only where people see a need to conserve and to protect the planet. Some educators and civic leaders are taking steps to foster a green culture.

The Town of Brighton (2300 Elmwood Ave., Rochester, NY 14618; www.greenbrighton.org) has launched an energy conservation campaign. Residents, businesses and presumably the town itself pledge to reduce energy and/or waste by 10% before December 31, 2008. Town officials, engineers, area teachers and others are distributing information. Citizens Campaign for the Environment (466 Westcott St. #200, Syracuse, NY 13210; www.citizenscampaign.org) assists towns in Upstate NY and in New England with similar campaigns. (*Democrat & Chronicle*, 1/7/08)

The Spokane Alliance (1526 E. 11th Ave., Spokane, WA 99202; www.spokanealliance.org), a community organization of 15 unions, three Catholic parishes and 14 Protestant congregations, is a pioneer in the *green and blue* strategy. The Alliance targets public buildings and business facilities that waste energy and contribute to carbon emissions. It brokers financing and other resources to retrofit buildings. The Alliance, an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation, also sponsors an apprentice program to prepare skilled trade workers. The green agenda will progress when the middle class and working poor have a stake in it, says Dick Harmon of the IAF (PO Box 82206, Portland, OR 97202). And "good green jobs that can't be exported" will

contribute to a sagging U.S. economy. (*Yes* [Spring/08], 284 Madrona Way NE #116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110; www.yesmagazine.org)

Some businesses are taking a longer view and concluding that environmentally-sensitive design and manufacturing attract customers, create jobs, and add to profit. Some months ago, for example, INITIATIVES profiled a Texas Instruments' plant in Texas that is green start-to-finish, top-to-bottom.

Now Frito-Lay (1450 W. Maricopa Hwy., Casa Grande, AZ 85293; www.fritolay.com) is retooling at least one plant with the goal of no external electric line, gas pipe or sewer. Its fuel will come from the sun and potato peels. Its water and heat will be entirely recycled. The project will take at least two more years, but the initial results are significant.

Other companies can get green advice from National Renewable Energy Laboratory (1617 Cole Blvd., Golden, CO 80401; www.nrel.gov), among other agencies. (*N.Y. Times*, 11/15/07)

Taking the Initiative *Among Med Students*

Each year the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture (1047 Flanner Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556; www.ethicscenter.nd.edu) hosts a conference on medical ethics. Bro. Daniel Sulmasy, OFM (Bioethics Institute of NY Medical College, Science Bldg. #A23, Valhalla, NY 10595; www.nymc.edu) was this year's main presenter.

Sulmasy, who is a medical doctor, put specific medical dilemmas on the back burner in order to focus on the meaning of work and the spirituality of health care. There are, he told the students and faculty, too few forums in which medical professionals can talk about the spiritual life in a workaday manner. Yet, the Divine Healer is present on the job, not only "in those occasional explicitly religious conversations [with a patient], but in all those countless moments in the office or in the hospital in which we communicate meaning and value." (*Today's Catholic* of South Bend, 3/23/08)

The ND Center for Ethics' website currently has a blog featuring Sulmasy on "health care as a spiritual discipline." And, Sulmasy has books, including *Rebirth of the Clinic: an Introduction to Spirituality in Health Care* (Georgetown University Press [2006], 3240

Prospect St. NW, Washington, DC 20007; \$26.95)

The Center for Catholic Studies (St. Thomas University, 2115 Summit Ave. #55S, St. Paul, MN 55105; www.stthomas.edu) has begun a three-year cycle of lectures and seminars on The Church and the Biomedical Revolution. It also offers an undergrad course, Christian Faith and the Medical Profession. A handful of students involved with the Center are pursuing a double major in Catholic studies and biochemistry with the intention to attend medical school.

Taking the Initiative

With Young Adults

Society and church “provide *almost nothing* for the developmental tasks that are accomplished when people are in their 20s and 30s,” writes Robert Wuthnow in a survey of the U.S. religious landscape, *After the Baby Boomers* (Princeton University Press [2007], 41 William St., Princeton, NJ 08540; \$29.95). Consequently, he says, “young adults are forced to be individualistic.” Wuthnow describes young adults as “a generation of tinkers.” They piece together a life, joining “seemingly inconsistent, disparate components,” including some spiritual and religious elements.

The transition between school and adult life now lasts a decade or more, comments David Brooks. It can be called the *odyssey years*. Young adults are not “slacking off.” They are chasing fluid opportunities. Their “period of improvisation is a sensible response to modern conditions.” Brooks notes that young adults are delaying marriage and children. The proportion of never married is also increasing. (*N.Y. Times*, 10/9/07)

More young adults today were not raised in religious families, says Wuthnow (Center for the Study of Religion, 5 Ivy Ln., Princeton, NJ 08540; www.princeton.edu/~csrelig). Fewer align themselves with any denomination. Fewer ever worship. Those who do worship attend less frequently. This is particularly the case in mainline denominations, but the number of young adults participating in evangelical congregations is in decline. There is a difference, Wuthnow details, between married and not-married young adults. A young adult who attends church is most likely married.

Young adults are interested in the meaning of work and relationships, but churches—urban and suburban, progressive and conservative—are simply not connecting with them.

Young Adult Ministry (711 W. Monroe St., Chicago, IL 60661; www.yamchicago.org) is the best outreach on the Catholic front. Its programs, including the summer Theology On Tap, are imitated around the country.

There are a handful of modestly successful Catholic programs pegged to the disaffected, some of whom are young adults. The Franciscans, for example, sponsor the website www.oncecatholic.org. Browsers can visit chat rooms on various topics and find a directory of welcoming parishes. The most popular chat rooms deal with divorce and arrogant Church employees.

Landings (407 Rock Spring Ct., College Station, TX 77845; www.landings-international.org) is an eight-week small group information and support program. There are six regional contact offices, each headed by a Paulist. Again, the most common topics in the groups are divorce and arrogant Church employees.

Catholics Returning Home (15925 Anna Dr., Wadsworth, IL 60083; www.catholicsreturninghome.org) is a similar six-session program. (*National Catholic Reporter* [1/25/08], 115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111 and *Today's Catholic* of Fort Wayne, 2/14/08)

Bill McGarvey (www.billmgarvey.com), an advisor to our National Center for the Laity, edits *Busted Halo* (405 W. 59th St., New York, NY 10019; www.bustedhalo.com), a website for young adults. In easy-going manner it draws connections between the Catholic tradition and young adult experiences of culture and work.

Taking the Initiative

For Homemakers

Next To Godliness edited by Alice Peck (Sky Light Paths [2007], PO Box 237, Woodstock, VT 05091; \$19.99) consists of 70 short reflections on homemaking from over 60 contributors, male and female, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and others. Some are poems; others are essays or just short sayings. The longest selection is 18 pages, another is four pages, but most are about one page.

Brother Lawrence (1605-1691) of France is one of several monks in the book. He does not confine his relationship with God to moments of private prayer. The time spent as community cook, he says, “does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees [adoring] the Blessed Sacrament.”

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) has advice for those prayerful souls who think they can do without the Marthas of this world. “It is true that we have *no lasting city*, no abiding dwellings [on earth]; it is true we are on pilgrimage, but as St. Catherine of Siena said, *all the way to heaven is heaven* for [Jesus] said *I am the way*. So it is our duty to take the materials God gives and take up our job of co-creator, and do the best we can.”

Next To Godliness contains an informative biography of each contributor and is enhanced by attractive pencil art.

Keeping House: the Litany of Everyday Life by Margaret Kim Peterson (Jossey Bass [2007], 989 Market St., San Francisco, CA 94103; \$21.95) is a Christian reflection on homemaking and its relationship with God’s creation, maintenance and salvation of humankind. “Keeping house can be a very mundane activity,” Peterson admits. But “housekeeping is about practicing sacred disciplines and creating sacred space, for the sake of Christ as we encounter him in our fellow household members and in our neighbors, strangers, and guests.”

For its part our National Center for the Laity has distributed all but 30 copies from a 3,000 pressrun of its booklet, *The Spirituality of Work: Homemakers* by Bill Droel, a gender inclusive meditation on the meaning of work.

Taking the Initiative For Actors

St. Malachy’s Church (239 W. 49th St., New York, NY 10019) has brought back its “actors’ Mass” at 11 P.M. each Saturday. The idea is to help Broadway actors, actresses, stagehands and theatergoers worship at a convenient time.

St. Malachy’s is so identified with the theater that over the years the parish itself is commonly known as The Actor’s Chapel. Fr. Richard Baker, the pastor, sees the additional

Mass as a piece of the parish’s revival. Its neighborhood, like others in Manhattan, is gaining new residential units and commerce.

Please tell INITIATIVES about other parishes that make a special effort to accommodate artists. (*Catholic N.Y.*, 12/20/07)

110+ Years Of Catholic Social Thought

How can Catholic social thought interact with U.S. public life? Where are points of influence? What moral language is understood in the marketplace? Will lay Catholics assume their responsibility in the aftermath of our bishops’ loss of credibility?

Dialogue between Catholic social thought and U.S. democracy is complex because of these questions and because of “a long history of mutual suspicion,” writes Thomas Smith of Villanova University. A starting point, he suggests, is recognizing that Catholicism’s ambivalence toward modern liberal democracy is matched by democracy’s “nagging anxiety over its meaning and direction.”

For example, the legitimacy of U.S. democracy is based in its “ability to improve the quality of everyday life and minimize suffering,” which it marvelously achieves through its alliance with technology. But the “embrace of modern natural science and technology” sometimes runs past human dignity, leaving people less secure.

Democracy advances freedom, yet in a way that channels people “into private cultural and economic endeavors” and away from public consensus. People in the U.S. seemingly have “a multitude of choices,” says Smith. But the notion of living independently without a prior commitment to public welfare results in “a spirit of anxiety and ennui in the souls of liberal democratic citizens.”

This is where Catholic philosophy has something to offer, Smith concludes. Its definition of a *person*, for example, is fuller than the notion of a *rugged individual*. In “Catholic social thought human beings are created interdependent” and they develop by joining with others. Likewise *justice* in Catholicism is not about executing *individual claims*, but is about participating or being included in “flourishing relationships.” It is possible that Catholic social thought has some timely “resources to help democracy out of its self-generated impasses.” Only that is if U.S. society

and Catholicism can find appropriate points at which each can respectfully act with each other. (*Logos* [Winter/08], University of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit Ave. #55S, St. Paul, MN 55105)

As an experimental strategy, the National Center for the Laity suggests that the church (all the people of God) habitually affirm our country's achievements and the best aspirations of U.S. culture—instead of solely denouncing our country's defects.

Of course, 1.2million abortions in 2007—albeit a slight decrease—are totally unacceptable. Certainly, the blatant and prevalent disregard for worker's rights, including the right

to organize without paternalism, is a violation of good order. Of course, the disregard for the sanctity of marriage on many TV shows is morally corrosive. These things warrant the condemnation of the church (all the people of God).

But what if young mothers and TV executives and business managers and union leaders and others routinely heard the church applaud the best in U.S. society and culture? Would Catholic social teaching enjoy more effective receptivity if the whole church focused more sharply on annunciation--at least for a period of time?

Rest in Peace

Chiara Lubich (1920-2008)

Lubich is co-founder of Focolare (PO Box 716, Hyde Park, NY 12538; www.focolare.us), an international lay movement. Most of its members are Catholic, but other Christians and people from other religions are included. In fact, Focolore is a leader in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue.

Focolare serves first as a support mechanism, giving language to faith-at-work, on the job, around the home and in the community. In hundreds of talks Lubich, borrowing from Catholic social teaching, popularized phrases to help young workers, business leaders, and parents remain conscious of the ultimate destiny of their daily routine; phrases like *economy of sharing, solidarity capital, a culture of giving* and more.

Parish life is so central to U.S. Catholicism that lay movements like Focolare are not well known here. Their visibility is higher in South America, Africa and some parts of Europe.

Happenings

Gene Ahner, author of *Business Ethics: Making a Life* (Orbis Books [2007], Maryknoll, NY 10545; \$25), will teach a June 2-6, 2008 course, Ethics for Business, at Catholic Theological Union (5401 S. Cornell Ave., Chicago, IL 60615; www.ctu.edu).

The John A. Ryan Institute (2115 Summit Ave. #55S, St. Paul, MN 55105; www.stthomas.edu/becu), along with 15 Catholic colleges, sponsors a conference on "Catholic Social Thought and Management Education" June 11-13, 2008 at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

Rest in Peace

Deacon Victor Yanaitis (1926-2008)

Yanaitis was a member of the second group of permanent deacons in Rochester, beginning his studies in 1979. Shortly after his ordination he was interviewed in INITIATIVES.

Back then the word *ministry* was coming into vogue in Catholic circles. Then and now, however, ministry is usually restricted to para-clerical involvement. "I'm starting *blue collar ministry*," Yanaitis declared. "Look, I put in 30 years as a machinist. I saw many factory workers who had a practical spirituality on the job. Some priests and religious are ignorant about blue-collar work. For example, they schedule parish meetings at 8 P.M. They have days of recollection that have nothing to do with the concerns and needs of blue collar types."

Yanaitis kept INITIATIVES informed over the years. "Whenever I tell workers—union members and non-union members alike—about the social teaching of the church and about you [social action] guys in Chicago, their faces light up with a smile of hope. 'It's about time someone in the church spoke up for workers,' they tell me."