

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

National Center for the Laity
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50 Years since Vatican II

“The secular is sacred.” With this slogan Msgr. Dan Cantwell (1915-1996), a principal founder of our National Center for the Laity, anticipated and subsequently propagated Vatican II (1962-1965).

Vatican II marks the church’s turn away from 400 years of fearing the world toward a dialogue with it. Now 50 years since Vatican II, several church leaders denounce *secularism*. Their analysis and their warning is not a detour from Vatican II—presuming the difference between *secularism* and *the secular* is properly understood.

A *secular society* is the opposite of the arrangement in the Middle Ages where the world built itself around and within the church. *Secular society* means that science, research, politics, management and the like have their own competence and autonomy. They are sacred in their own way, subject to God but with no need for an additional sugar-coating of religion. *Secularism*, by contrast, drives out religion—sometimes through attacks on the clergy; sometimes by neglecting God; often by substituting culture or politics for God. *Secularism* is a companion to consumerism, relativism, extreme individualism and other *isms*.

Who opens the door to secularism? Surprisingly, Cantwell says, one culprit is the church itself, through our fear and condemnation of the world rather than critical dialogue with the world. “I sometimes feel that secularism begins with us...in our religious atmosphere. [It can be] the product of Christians who have rejected the temporal order,” he says. “We [the church] have gone on content to teach the eternal truths [while] we have repudiated [or] we are uninterested in the social and democratic movements all about us, with a lack of concern that claims to be rooted in religion.”

Cantwell spoke to graduates of Catholic high schools and colleges. They told him about “the success ideal given them at school.” But within a short time after graduation they saw “too much social climbing in the atmosphere, too much emphasis on getting ahead, making money, getting on top.” The

young workers in Cantwell’s circle didn’t have a ready spiritual compass. They were disappointed they did not receive a sustainable alternative vision in school. A developed notion of vocation would help, Cantwell says. But the word *vocation* is still synonymous with ordination or religious life. “We are still not clear about the essential vocation of every Christian to be an apostle everywhere, still not clear about our vocation of incarnating the Love of God in individuals and in social institutions... There is an unselfish work to be done for Christ today in shops, offices, homes, marketplaces and neighborhoods.” (*Commonweal* [10/1/48], 475 Riverside Dr. #405, New York, NY 10115)

Cantwell’s entire adult life was spent engaging the world as a seminary teacher and a pastor. He was also chaplain to many lay groups dealing with housing, labor relations, family life and race, and he was a founder of a facility for the mentally handicapped (Vineyard Homes, 101 Cantwell Ct., Purgitsville, WV 26852). Though always soft-spoken (we called him an *urban mystic*), Cantwell’s dialogue with the world was never flimsy—as if Christian faith should take a backseat, which only makes *secularism* more likely.

“The secular is sacred. Nothing God decides to do can be beneath God,” Cantwell often said. “God is not unhappy with modernity and God’s church needs the world here and now.”

Msgr. Dan Cantwell

Taking the Initiative

With Bikes

Ivan Illich (1926-2002) says that dependence on cars, buses, trains and planes in daily travel exposes “contradictions between social justice and motorized power, between effective movement and higher speed, between personal freedom and engineered routing.” Not so, he writes, with bicycles. “The invention of the ball-bearing, the tangent-spoked wheel and the pneumatic tire” made transit fast and energy efficient without the negatives of motor transport. Bikes are ideal for cities, says Illich. (*Energy and Equity*, Harper Collins [1974])

Sometime ago a couple of 50something types were chatting in the parking lot of a Catholic Worker house. Low-wage workers lack transportation, they said. Cars are expensive and polluting. Plus lots of children need to get around. Thus began R-Community Bikes (PO Box 26471, Rochester, NY 14626; www.rcommunitybikes.net).

Now there are 150 volunteers, 20 cooperating agencies and several participating bike clubs. Used bikes are donated and then hundreds of parts are cleaned, sorted and eventually re-commissioned. About 2,500 recycled bikes were given away last year. The recipient must present a referral from an agency like Catholic Charities, House of Mercy, or Salvation Army. The rider must have a lock or buy an R-CB lock for \$5. People can also pedal into R-CB warehouse for repairs

R-CB not only meets a transportation need and contributes to a green planet, but also provides some job training for young people. There is a touch of Catholic Worker culture in R-CB. For example, its newsletter, *Spokes & Folks*, has a volunteer profile and a wish list, common features in many Catholic Worker papers. The needs include gear cables, a spoke thread device and, of course, money. *Spokes & Folks* describes bike trails and explains how to replace a derailleur. The newsletter has a Catholic Worker-like *On Pilgrimage* column by R-CB director Dan Lill.

Meanwhile, the cyber-network Oregon Manifest (www.oregonmanifest.com) will open voting late this month for best bike designed for *citizen riders*, “urbanities who want healthier, simpler lives without calling themselves *cyclists*.”

Garry Alderman (Method Bicycle, 1138 W. Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60607;

www.methodbicycle.com) and his team represent the Chicago entry. “The soul of a really great challenge is how do you get people to think twice about driving,” Alderman says. (*Chicago Tribune*, 4/1/14)

Bikes, Illich concludes, are good for democracy. “Free people must travel the road to productive social relations at the speed of a bicycle.”

Taking the Initiative

Against Sweatshops

Brad Loewen recently left his job as Winnipeg’s fire protection engineer and with his wife moved to Dhaka, Bangladesh, where he now directs Accord on Fire and Building Safety (www.bangladeshaccord.org). It is a coalition of over 100 apparel companies plus international unions, including IndustriALL Global (CH 1211, Geneva 22, Switzerland; www.ilo.org). The businesses joined Accord in response to the April 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza sweatshop that killed over 1,000 workers.

Loewen, a Mennonite leader, has a big job. He has 38 teams of international engineers who, along with others from Bangladesh, are authorized to inspect 1,600 factories, 250 per month. In that one small country there are perhaps 5,600 clothing factories, employing about four million workers. They earn less than \$40 per month, often working seven days per week.

Loewen’s first round targeted buildings of at least five stories, often with multiple factories. Exits were a big problem, he found. Most are not really fire doors and often have locked gates across them. “The stairwells have to be separate from the factory floor,” he tells reporter Steven Greenhouse. At one large factory the electrical equipment was not secure, the alarms were not automated and stairwells actually ended inside the building, not outdoors. This particular factory “is one of the best in Bangladesh and it still had major problems,” says Scott Nova of Workers Rights Consortium (5 Thomas Cr. NW, Washington, DC 20005; www.workersrights.org).

Loewen’s inspections cover only those places that are sub-contractors with one or more Accord signatories, mostly Western European and Canadian brands. U.S. retailers are wary about their liability when their overseas contractor is faulted for safety. Thus several of them (Wal-Mart, Target and others) formed

Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety (www.bangladeshworkersafety.org) which will monitor 830 factories. In addition, Wal-Mart contracts with Bureau Veritas, an inspection company based in a Paris suburb with several U.S. offices. Bureau will look at another 200 factories used by Wal-Mart. (*The Marketplace* [4/14], 532 N. Oliver Rd., Newton, KS 67114 and *N.Y. Times*, 3/12/14 and *Chicago Tribune*, 3/19/14)

Meanwhile, United Students Against Sweatshops (1155 Connecticut Ave. NW #500, Washington, DC 20036; www.usas.org) continues to lobby retail companies. It urges those based in the U.S. to sign Accord on Fire and Building Safety, which USAS thinks is more objective.

USAS recently sponsored a visit by two women from Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity (c/o Solidarity Center, 888 16th St. NW #400, Washington, DC 20006; www.solidaritycenter.org) to University of Minnesota. Students learned about approaching their college's administration regarding apparel that carries the Gopher logo. The college bookstore and private stores must only sell clothes and hats that are made in harmony with the Accord. The tactic, INITIATIVES can attest, works, especially if fellow students or administrators object to USAS policy; though many schools react positively. In those conflict situations education occurs. (*Union Advocate* [3/14], 411 Main St., St. Paul, MN 55102)

Taking the Initiative

In Liturgy

Why 50 years after Vatican II (1962-1965) is there no longer a liturgical movement in the U.S.? Is it because full and active liturgical participation is the norm? Is it simply because there is no hub for a movement; no Fr. Virgil Michel, OSB (1890-1938) to sustain it? Is it because liturgy specialists (musicians, preachers and planners) refine their craft in such a way that lay people would be a distraction at their meetings? Is it because the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and its implied connection between liturgy and workplace justice was tried but proved not to be compelling? Or because today's liturgical planners think of justice only as a weekend voluntary activity, not as daily work?

The connection between liturgy and work is a main theme in *There Were Also Many*

Women There: Lay Women in the Liturgical Movement in the U.S. 1926-1959 by Katharine Harmon (Liturgical Press [2012], PO Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321; \$39.95). The Mystical Body was "the watchword for the liturgical movement and the laity's ownership over the project of converting the world," she writes. "Liturgical renewal walks hand-in-hand with movements for social justice," for those pre-Vatican II leaders. The theory was that the Eucharist and other liturgical prayers are "a radical alternative to patterns of individualistic piety" and likewise an alternative to individualism in the marketplace.

Harmon's profiles include Dorothy Day (1897-1980), Catherine de Hueck Doherty (1896-1985) and others less well known, including Nina Polcyn Moore (1914-2006), who participated in several National Center for the Laity events.

Many people can identify Jane Addams (1860-1935) as the 1889 founder of Hull House, but few remember her co-founder, Ellen Gates Starr (1859-1940). Starr, as Harmon details, was a pioneer in the Arts and Crafts movement and a champion of dock workers and those in textile factories. With her reception into Catholicism Starr joined those interests with the liturgical movement.

Ade Bethune (1914-2002) thought that liturgical art and depictions of Jesus and the saints in catechisms and the like was too often sentimental. She was an artist who believed the holy is in the ordinary. Further, she thought every worker is an artist with a God-like faculty for creativity; and that, writes Harmon, "all work [has] the potential to be works of mercy." To cooperate with God's work requires using quality material and being a quality worker because the offertory procession brings weekday work to the altar. Harmon quotes Bethune: The bread and wine at Mass is "the works of our life... All day long, and all our life long, we fashion the offerings which we shall take to the altar."

Harmon's women didn't wait for an ideal Mass at an ideal parish. Among other insights, they appreciated that the liturgy also means the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours. Perhaps that public prayer can be a way for lay people to begin again the connection between the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the world. There are two popular editions of the Office: *Magnificat* (PO Box 833, Yonkers, NY 10702) and *This Day* (PO Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321).

At the Great Workbench

Kerry Weber is a young adult in New York who devised an unusual Lent discipline. It was on, INITIATIVES estimates, Mardi gras 2013 when she pledged to do each of the corporeal works of mercy within the next 40 days; plus give up alcohol and desserts.

Her adventure, as charmingly told in *Mercy in the City* (Loyola Press [2014], 3441 N. Ashland Ave., Chicago, IL 60657; \$13.95), yields lessons about mainstream workaday peace, justice and ministry. Her subthemes include *relationships* (especially with family and boyfriends) and *Lent+Easter* (as seen through her participation on an RCIA team).

Early on Weber wonders if she is “overly pious.” Well, she has a healthy interest in Catholic tradition at time when many young adults do not. Yet Weber is not judgmental. She is believable when she says, “I’m happy.”

As Lent proceeds, Weber worries that she might not “adhere to these sacrifices perfectly,” as when she counts sugar-laden Cinnamon Toast Crunch as her dinner, not a dessert. Or she worries that a mixed attitude like being crabby while helping someone negates her compassion. From the beginning, but only gradually, Weber learns that Christian behavior is something done regularly and those virtues “must become habits.”

As Lent nears its end, Weber’s project gets contrived. To fulfill *to bury the dead* she interviews a gravedigger who uses a backhoe. But because he doesn’t frame his daily work in explicit Christian terms she doesn’t quite see his spirituality. With Easter approaching, she still needs *to give drink to the thirsty*. So Weber staffs a water-station at a marathon. The lesson asserts itself: “As I scrambled around the city looking for people to care for,” Weber realizes that her boyfriend routinely and without fanfare cares for his ill grandmother.

INITIATIVES does not regularly feature individual forays into charity, even though its use of the term *spirituality of work* is inclusive of work on the job, for the family and in the community; paid and unpaid. Rather, INITIATIVES desires to highlight the sanctity of normal daily work. The entire church needs to appreciate that nurses and medical technicians *visit the sick*, no matter that on some days those workers are crabby and usually don’t have a moment to reflect on their faith. So too plumbers and hydraulic engineers *give drink to the thirsty*,

even though they have mixed motives (like feeding their family and honoring their profession) and even though while on the job they don’t consciously think about faith. It is the ministry of these ordinary Christians that is of interest to INITIATIVES and why our National Center for the Laity challenges the entire people of God to assist them with grateful prayer, liturgical recognition perhaps, opportunities for support groups, and solidarity in efforts to improve work conditions.

Mercy in the City is good spiritual reading at any time, but INITIATIVES recommends it for the days between Super Bowl Sunday (February 1, 2015) and Mardi gras (February 17, 2015). Lent 2015 will thus be more interesting.

North American Spirituality

Orestes Brownson (1803-1876)

This INITIATIVES’ column profiles deceased, exemplary North American Catholics. Russell Shaw is now doing the same in a series for *Our Sunday Visitor* (200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750).

Brownson, writes Shaw (3/2/14), “was the most distinguished American Catholic public intellectual of the 19th century.” He was influential within his circle of colleagues and with those who read his *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* and his books. At the same time Brownson could be testy, hard to follow and dramatically changeable. “Brownson’s thinking shifted [and] he contradicted himself,” says Shaw. He likewise sampled several traditions including Presbyterian, Congregational, Unitarian and Transcendental before his 1844 reception into Catholicism.

Brownson’s *The American Republic* (Intercollegiate Studies [1866], 3901 Centerville Rd., Wilmington, DE 19807; \$16.95) is a classic in political theory. In it he says the U.S. “is chosen by God,” as is “every nation in some sense.” Catholic leaders should appreciate our country and lift up “the principles on which the [U.S.] is founded, [principles which] have their origin and ground in the spiritual order.” Like his friend Fr. Isaac Hecker, CSP (1819-1888), Brownson felt that the U.S. ethos benefited Catholicism and Catholicism has a crucial contribution to make in our society.

And then, as Shaw explains, Brownson changed his mind. There is “scarcely a trait in the [U.S.] character...that is not more or less

hostile to Christianity,” he said. Further, “the church has never encountered a social and political order so hostile” as in the U.S.

Brownson celebrated our democratic spirit, but over time he supported total obedience to the papacy, even in temporal matters. His friend Hecker was an ecumenical pioneer, while Brownson moved toward Catholic theocracy. For this reason and because of what Shaw calls “his distaste” for Irish-Americans, some U.S. bishops came to oppose Brownson.

Brownson is buried in the center aisle of the crypt chapel below the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame. The Orestes Brownson Society (3003 Eagle Pass, Louisville, KY 40217; www.orestesbrownson.com) has many of his writings on its website.

Hecker is next on Shaw’s list and, if it is ok with Shaw, on INITIATIVES’ too.

120+ Years

Of Catholic Social Thought

120+ years ago Pope Leo XIII’s (1810-1903) encyclical *On the Condition of Labor* asserted a natural right to private property. This marked a shift in emphasis of Catholic social thought, says Eduardo Penalver, newly appointed dean of Cornell Law School.

The early church recognized private property, Penalver explains. But the first Christians considered it a necessary departure from the ideal of *everything held in common*.

Early leaders warned of property’s danger. St. Basil the Great (329-379), for example, says “wealth is a good to be administered, and not as a source of enjoyment.” Penalver mentions Basil’s comparison of the overall economy with a theatre. Someone buys a ticket for a show but then, says Basil, “chooses the others who may attend, claiming to own the theatre.” A person who “is the first to occupy a common good [is not] entitled to take [the whole] for themselves.”

Happenings and Resources

Faith at Work Summit will convene near Logan Airport on October 24-25, 2014. Its purpose is to “assess the state of the faith and work movement [and to] develop an agenda going forward.” The sponsors are Protestant institutions—though all are invited to participate. The topics include Biblical foundations of faith and work, global economy, business ethics, poverty, seminary and business school education, congregation efforts and more. More information and registration is through Gordon-Conwell Seminary (130 Essex St. South Hamilton, MA 01982; <http://fwsummit.org>).

St. Ambrose (340-397), as Penalver continues, said the only difference between a rich person’s grave and a poor person’s “will be that a lot more things have rotted around the rich man.”

By the time of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) private property is called a natural right, but as a concession to human reality. It is like leasing, but no option to exclusively and permanently buy. That is, use property, but don’t waste; an overabundance reverts to common property. (See *Acts* 4:37; 5:1-11; etc. & *Good News to the Poor* by Julio de Santa Ana, Orbis Books [1979] & *Summa Theologica* Part II-II, Question 66 by St. Thomas)

Some years after Leo XIII the cautions become prominent again. Pope John Paul II (1920-2005), for example, said in his 1979 address to the Puebla Conference “that the Church’s teaching...is that there is a *social mortgage* on all private property.” And last year Pope Francis said that moral arguments for a free market would have to pass an empirical test. The notion that “trickle-down theories...will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness...has never been confirmed by the facts.” (See *Puebla and Beyond* edited by John Eagleson, Orbis Books [1979] & *Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis, National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$12.50)

Penalver spoke at “Jewish and Catholic Approaches to Property and Social Justice,” a March event sponsored by Lumen Christi (1220 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637; www.lumenchristi.org) and our National Center for the Laity. Penalver’s Jewish counterpart was Joseph William Singer, author of *Edges of the Field: Obligations of Ownership* (Beacon Press [2000], 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108; \$16). Drawing upon Scripture, he says the slogan *what’s mine is mine* is never the last word in Judaism. About 150 people who participated in the seminar were treated to a grand view of Chicago from the 47th floor of our host, Jenner & Block law firm.

University of St. Thomas (2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105; www.stthomas.edu/theology/Vatican2) hosts “*Church in the Modern World After 50 Years*” on March 12-14, 2015. Presenters include among others Massimo Faggioli, author of *Vatican II: the Battle for Meaning* (Paulist Press [2012], 997 Macarthur Blvd., Mahwah, NJ 07430; \$14.95) and Cathleen Kaveny, who recently joined NCL advisor Vince Rougeau on the Boston College Law School faculty.

Our National Center for the Laity, like University of St. Thomas, will celebrate Vatican II’s (1962-1965) golden anniversary with a March 22-24, 2015 conference titled “Joy and Hope,” which is another title for the Council’s *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. This event is spearheaded by Center for Social Concerns (228 Geddes Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556; www.centerforsocialconcerns.nd.edu). This marks the third time NCL has assisted CSC. The previous conference had over 300 participants.

The Templeton Foundation (300 Conshohocken State Rd. #500, W. Conshohocken, PA 19428; www.templetonprize.org) gives its 2014 award to Msgr. Tomas Halik of Czech Republic. The award is about \$1.8million. Templeton applauds Halik’s fight for religious freedom under communism and now his vigorous inter-religious dialogue.

Halik was received into the Catholic church at age 18, reports Jonathan Luxmoore (*The Tablet* [3/22/14], 1 King St. Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 OGY, England). He was involved in the 1968 Prague Spring but subsequently was forced to study underground. He was secretly ordained in Germany. After the fall of communism Halik held teaching positions and Chancery offices. He has “grown disillusioned with the church’s post-communist preoccupation with money and property,” says Luxmoore. Thus Halik spends his time at Charles University and in the wider civic/religious community. “Both conservatives and progressives make the mistake of taking the Church’s institutions too seriously,” says Halik. The arena for renewal is the wider world.

There are two Halik books in English: *Patience with God: the Story of Zacchaeus* (Doubleday [2009], 1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019; \$13.99 e-book only) and *Night of the Confessor: Christian Faith in an Age of Uncertainty* (Doubleday [2012]; \$14).

Bill Lange in Wisconsin has a blog (www.faithandlabor.blogspot.com) that summarizes many Catholic social documents, provides history of Christians and the labor movement, furnishes links to Catholic newspapers and other resources, plus an occasional op-ed piece. Lange is well qualified. He served as a missionary in Bolivia and then was a factory worker in Milwaukee. He is involved with immigration reform groups.

Pope Francis is expected to visit Philadelphia in September 2015. Los Angeles County Federation of Labor (2130 James Wood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90006; www.pope2la.org) invites Francis to extend his visit and come to the other coast—or make a separate trip to LA. INITIATIVES’ readers are welcome to sign the invitation on the special website. Other Catholic leaders in LA support the invitation campaign.

Before arriving in the U.S., Pope Francis is expected to release his first encyclical. Technically, *The Light of Faith* (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$6), issued in June 2013, is his first. However, Francis admits that Pope Benedict XVI drafted this encyclical to which Francis “added a few contributions of my own.” The topic of the new encyclical is likely to be the environment.

Catholic Climate Covenant (PO Box 60205, Washington, DC 20039; www.catholicclimatecovenant.org) is a source for Catholic teaching on the environment. The group has resources for classrooms and for the liturgy. Its website has links to other environmental groups. CCC invites INITIATIVES’ readers to sign its St. Francis Pledge.

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The National Center for the Laity's board members are Chuck DiSalvo, Tom Donnelly, Bill Droel, John Hazard, Caroline Hopkinson, Phil Moore, Frosty Pipal, Terry Mambu Rasch and Lauren Sukal.

The National Center for the Laity is an independent 501-C-3 corporation, chartered in 1978 in the State of Illinois. It exists:

- As a catalyst for the discussion of church-laity-world as provoked by Vatican II (1962-1965) and by NCL's 1977 charter, *A Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern* (found in *Church: Chicago Style*, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$5.50)
- As a network facilitator of people and institutions that search for a spirituality that grows out of daily occupations and professions.
- As a *ginger group* [an agitating conscience within a broader movement for social improvement]; invigorating parishes, schools, agencies and U.S. bishops toward support of the connection between work and Christian life.
- As a center of information on the role of the Christian in the world; specifically by publishing INITIATIVES and assisting others in writing and research on the church and world.

“The church has always maintained that the key to the social question is work. The worker is at the center... Because of this you cannot look at work from a purely functional perspective. What's at the core is neither profit nor capital. The person is not for work, work is for the worker.” –Pope Francis

