

<h1>Initiatives</h1> <p>In Support of Christians in the World</p>	<p>National Center for the Laity          PO Box 291102          Chicago, IL 60629  <a href="http://www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm">www.catholiclabor.org/NCL.htm</a></p>	<p><b>November 2006</b></p> <p><b>Number 160</b></p>
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## Catholic After Mass

“We’re told to go. Dismissed from the celebration of Mass,” writes Elisa Rose. “We’re sent back into the world, back to shopping malls, schools and work. [But] how do we carry the Mass with us to work?” (*Our Sunday Visitor* [9/3/06], 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750)

To answer her critical question, Rose profiles four workers--an electrician, a fire department captain, a fundraising consultant and a researcher. However, while offering some important themes and workplace tips, Rose overlooks the distinctly Catholic dimension of workaday faith.

Competence is indeed essential to living the gospel during the week. Catholics do well by not swearing on the job. Offering the workday to God is a time-honored Catholic practice. Saying a quick prayer before answering the phone is a good discipline. But, for a Catholic, what about the content of your work? How is the work itself adding to the common good? And when do you join with workmates to exercise the virtue of social justice by, for example, improving a company’s policy in one or another area?

For nearly 30 years our National Center for the Laity has been part of a conversation about business ethics, spirituality at work, faith in daily life and the like. The NCL, as a Catholic organization, is uncomfortable with how the entire topic is too often reduced to individual behavior—important as are competence, personal integrity and good example.

Each year the newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, *The Catholic Spirit* (244 Dayton Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102), sponsors a “Leading With Faith” contest. People in and around the Twin Cities can nominate someone “whose faith is influencing the workplace through business practices.” The finalists and winners, grouped in categories by *The Catholic Spirit*, are honored at a luncheon.

The criteria for “Leading With Faith” implicitly include the content of a person’s work. That is, *The Catholic Spirit* seems to know that an exemplary Catholic must not only be

competent, prayerful and a nice worker. A Catholic must additionally be doing something worthwhile and—whenever possible—must, with like-minded coworkers, be pushing the company into new areas, into better delivery of products and service, and into more participation of employees.

The 2006 “Leading With Faith” winners include Michael Smeby of University Bank, who promotes special financing to rehab homes in struggling neighborhoods. Thomas Dooher, another winner, negotiates contracts on behalf of teachers, balancing their interests with those of students, parents, taxpayers and school administrators.

It is difficult to flesh out the Catholic gospel of work and Rose’s article in *Our Sunday Visitor*, admittedly, aids the effort by highlighting some parts of the whole.

Maybe one problem comes from looking for individual Catholics who live the faith, Monday through Saturday. For in the Catholic imagination, faith is lived out in groups. And thus maybe next year *The Catholic Spirit* should give one “Leading With Faith” award to a group.

Opus Dei (330 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10025; [www.opusdei.org](http://www.opusdei.org)), founded in 1928, is a pioneer in the spirituality of work. But, as John Allen notes, it too focuses on the individual Catholic. Its phrase, *the sanctification of work*, implies that individual Opus Dei members have something extra to bring to the marketplace. This, Allen hints, could partially explain why Opus Dei members are big on piety but sometimes neglectful of social justice inside their businesses. (*Opus Dei*, Doubleday [2005], 1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019; \$24.95)

Our National Center for the Laity promotes a notion of worldly holiness that goes beyond the individual because a full Catholic approach, while attending to piety and good example, cannot be distracted from the demands of justice. “There is no need to bring God to the marketplace,” says NCL founder Msgr. Dan Cantwell (1915-1996). “God’s grace is already embedded there. Your job is to help others experience the compassion of Christ and help institutions reflect his justice.”

## Taking the Initiative

### *With Music*

The Lira Ensemble (6525 N. Sheridan Rd. #CHLL, Chicago, IL 60626; [www.liraensemble.com](http://www.liraensemble.com)), the nation's only professional performing arts company specializing in Polish music and dance, has a long history of successful outreach to other ethnic communities, including Mexican-American/Polish-American concerts for the last 14 years and African-American/Polish-American concerts for the past eight years. It also sponsors Polish/Jewish concerts with the American Jewish Committee, performed in many synagogues. These concerts, under the artistic direction of Lucyna Migala, received the Human Relations Award from the Chicago Commission on Human Relations.

Lira's Mexican-American/Polish-American concerts feature the Cuerdas Clasicas String Ensemble as well as Lira's female vocal group, the Lira Singers. The 90-minute performances are given in spring as a joint celebration of Cinco de Mayo and Polish Constitution Day, which is May 3rd. Lira's African-American/Polish-American concerts feature the NGOMA Group of African-American singers and instrumentalists. These concerts spotlight spirituals, gospel and blues, as well as Polish-American folk, religious and patriotic music. The purpose of the concerts is to create an open atmosphere of acceptance and mutual respect. The narration during the concerts points out the commonalities in the histories and immigrant experience of the groups. The concerts evoke a spirit of understanding and acceptance, a setting for the healing that is so sorely needed in neighborhoods wounded by cross-ethnic violence, schools troubled with ethnic discord, and a city coping with ethnic and racial conflicts. The concerts, usually presented in churches located in changing neighborhoods, are followed by a reception at which members of the audience meet the artists and each other. A simple reception enables people of the various communities to meet and talk.

Robert Putnam of Harvard University is well known for his study of the steady "decline in sociability and civic participation across the U.S." (See *Bowling Alone* [2000], Simon & Schuster, 1230 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020; \$16)

There is nothing in Putnam's data to "suggest that the downward trend [will] suddenly

reverse itself." It will take thousands of deliberate person-to-person contacts in small group settings, month-by-month. Some strategies, Putnam finds, are better for homogeneous groups. Other strategies, especially those using art and music, are the best tools for mixing different types of people, for *bridging social capital*. (*Better Together* by Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein, Simon & Schuster [2003]; \$26.95)

Please send INITIATIVES reports on efforts like Lira Ensemble's, efforts using music to *bridge social capital*.

## Taking the Initiative

### *In the Backyard*

Protest and social justice are not the same, although the former can lead to the latter. The unique act of social justice is bringing together like-minded people to reform an institution or implement a policy.

Interfaith Worker Justice (1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. #400, Chicago, IL 60660; [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org)) does its share of protesting. In a recent incident in its backyard (or, more accurately, out its side window) IWJ provides a case study in effective social justice.

IWJ rents from Edgewater Presbyterian Church, which in April began a \$450,000 tuckpointing job—a common maintenance task in the Windy City. As IWJ covered its windows with plastic to cut down on dust, it noticed that the workers were not properly protected. Sure enough, the church had signed a non-union, no-bid contract.

Sr. Barbara Pfarr, SSND and Kim Bobo of IWJ (both of whom are longtime friends of our National Center for the Laity) sprang into action. They arranged a meeting between church leaders and the Tuckpointers Union. The church agreed to examine payroll records and safety equipment for this job. IWJ also alerted OSHA. Then IWJ met with the Presbytery Committee on Building Construction, only to learn that treatment of workers until now was a non-factor to the committee. IWJ is helping the Presbytery reform its policies. (*Faith Works* [8/06], 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. #400, Chicago, IL 60660)

Some—although not all—Catholic institutions have formal policies regarding union contractors and worker safety during construction jobs. For example, the Archdiocese of Chicago (PO Box 1979, Chicago, IL 60690; [www.archchicago.org](http://www.archchicago.org)) has "construction

guidelines” that say: “To the extent that unions...guarantee rights including just compensation, medical insurance, disability insurance, workers’ compensation and safe working conditions, the Archdiocese shall support them. Accordingly, in normal circumstances, union contractors shall be used... For projects over \$300,000, all contracts shall be union contracts.”

## **Taking the Initiative** *Toward Collective Bargaining*

The 1935 National Labor Relations Act, also known as the Wagner Act, is supposed to protect workers’ rights to unionize. Sadly, writes David Gregory of St. John’s University, the NLRB—the agency that enforces the Act—is now a hindrance.

Employers, normally cool toward government agencies, are often eager to get the NLRB involved in the workplace because it delays proceedings about a union. It takes several years to get from an initial union drive to an NLRB-supervised election. Even if a union eventually wins an election, the employer uses the NLRB to stall on a contract for many months. In fact, only half of all union-won elections ever result in successful collective bargaining. Meanwhile, the NLRB rules for employers who call individual pro-union workers on the carpet. The NLRB also steadily excludes types and groups of workers from protection under the Wagner Act. (*America* [9/4/06], 106 W. 56<sup>th</sup> St., New York, NY 10019)

For example, writes David Moberg, nearly all hospitals, including Catholic institutions, use the NLRB to relentlessly fight unions. A hospital will, to pick one example, tell the NLRB that occasional charge nurses are supervisors and thus they are to be excluded from any bargaining unit. (*In These Times* [8/06], 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647)

It is extremely difficult in the U.S. to exercise workers’ rights using “the classic secret ballot election process” which is administered by the NLRB, details Jordan Barab. That’s why 70% of private-sector workers who joined a union last year did so by means the *card check* tactic. A pro-union employee team gets as many co-workers as possible to sign a card, indicating their desire for a union. The team then takes the cards to the boss, asking for recognition. Sometimes the answer is *yes*; often it is *no*.

Several members of Congress, Barab reports, support an “Employee Free Choice Act” (Senate #842; House #1696) that “would require employers to recognize a union after a majority of workers sign cards authorizing union representation.” (*Union Labor News* [9/06], 1602 Park St. #228, Madison, WI 53715)

For more information on the card check legislation, contact American Rights At Work (1100 17<sup>th</sup> St. NW #950, Washington, DC 20036; [www.americanrightsatwork.org](http://www.americanrightsatwork.org)) or Interfaith Worker Justice (1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. #400, Chicago, IL 60660; [www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org)).

For more background on the Wagner Act and its 1947 successor, the Taft-Hartley Act, read *Which Side Are You On?* by Tom Geoghegan (Plume [1991], 375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014; \$11).

## **Taking the Initiative** *On Campus*

About four years ago a dozen undergrads at the University of Notre Dame started Campus Labor Action Project (University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556; [www.campuslaboractionproject.org](http://www.campuslaboractionproject.org)). They successfully got ND to support tomato pickers by ending a contract with Taco Bell. (The tomato issue, by the way, is resolved. Eat Taco Bell!)

Now CLAP wants a campus-wide taskforce to study wages and working conditions of ND employees. CLAP has been able to meet with ND president Fr. John Jenkins, CSC for only one minute following a sit-in outside his office. An ND vice-president told the group to mind their own business, saying “ND is the employer of choice in the region.” Kamaria Porter, a recent ND grad, says the CLAP campaign is different from a Fighting Irish sports event. The goal is not to outdo other employers but “to embrace a conversation [about] how we can more faithfully follow our church’s teachings.” (*Connection* [10/06], 25 E St. NW #200, Washington, DC 20001)

Teresa Ghilarducci, director of Higgins Labor Research Center (511 Flanner Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556; [www.nd.edu/~hlrc](http://www.nd.edu/~hlrc)), calls the CLAP presentation “thoughtful [and] well executed.” The Center is named in honor of a Chicago priest, Msgr. George Higgins (1916-2002).

Jenkins certainly has a lot on his mind. Nonetheless, at a time when Catholic universities are struggling to assert their Catholic identity, a

president ought to clear the desk for pro-life, pro-labor and other student groups interested in Catholic teaching.

Students involved in labor issues at Dominican University, Georgetown University and other schools are urged to send reports to INITIATIVES.

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## Work Prayers

Verna Dozier, now 89, was a public school teacher in Washington for 34 years and then an adult education leader in the Episcopal Church. Over the years she spoke in every Episcopal province and most dioceses. She was involved in publishing many Bible study pamphlets and other materials for parishes through her association with Alban Institute (2121 Cooperative Way #100, Herndon, VA 20171; [www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)).

*Confronted by God: the Essential Verna Dozier* edited by Cynthia Shattuck and Fredrica Harris Thompsett (Seabury Books [2006], 445 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10016; \$16) captures the wisdom of this street-level saint. Here is an excerpt:

Day and night “devotion to the [parish] on the part of a layperson is a danger signal...Something’s wrong, either in the family or somewhere else...Laypeople do carry out [liturgical and educational] functions in Church, but to me they are always secondary functions for laity. The layperson’s primary function is out there in the world...Somehow the absolute primacy of the baptismal rite as qualifying one for citizenship in the kingdom was lost and instead membership in the Church became the important criteria. Good deeds—good Church deeds—became ministry: how many hours you taught Sunday school, how many terms you served on the vestry, how many years on the altar guild...Christians need to go out on Monday morning into the kingdom of God as doctors or salesclerks.”

Dozier once participated in a conference that concluded with a Eucharistic liturgy. The attendees were told to move to a different location in order to have “sacred space.” Dozier was troubled by the implication that “*sacred space* [is] a place different from where life is lived...I believe that [sacred space is] where mothers tend their children, teachers guide their students, doctors care for their patients, police

officers patrol the streets, laborers ply their trade.”

Greg Pierce, former president of our National Center for the Laity, is campaigning for an improved dismissal rite at Mass, one that inspires Christians to live the gospel of work. Dozier suggests a dismissal from the *Book of Common Prayer*:

“And now, Father send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.”  
Thanks be to God.

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## 110+ Years

### *Of Catholic Social Thought*

“Globalization represents both peril and promise to our world,” writes Fr. John Coleman, SJ in his introduction to *Globalization and Catholic Social Thought* (Orbis Books [2006], PO Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545; \$30). Catholicism, Coleman continues, cannot influence global developments through pronouncements from on high, but only by joining a conversation that includes perspectives from “theology, philosophy, sociology, political science, economics, history” and more.

There are 14 contributors (including six other Jesuits) from various disciples in Coleman’s book, edited with Fr. William Ryan, SJ.

Another new book, *Economic Justice in an Unfair World: Toward a Level Playing Field* by Ethan Kapstein (Princeton University Press [2006], 41 William St., Princeton, NJ 08540; \$27.95), picks up the debate about what economic system is best to build “a fair, more just world,” including the poor parts of that world. Using political and economic analytical tools, Kapstein concludes that the free trade and investment system is best. He gives such a system the highest marks because it is, at least potentially, “a resource redistribution mechanism...that is welfare enhancing for all participants.”

A self-described advocate of “liberal internationalism,” Kapstein recognizes that the trade regime as it exists today is not as wealth-enhancing as it should be. It ignores obligations to workers who become unemployed because of import competition, for example, and it is “tilted against the developing world.” The reforms he proposes—such as giving poor countries more voice in trade negotiations—are, in Kapstein’s opinion, achievable by governments because of

their self-interest in sidetracking radical movements that oppose the status quo.

In a long review of *Economic Justice in an Unfair World*, Robert Wade of the London School of Economics notes that academics that write about globalization usually avoid ethical questions. Kapstein's book, Wade points out, "marks an important exception." The same is true of Wade's review, titled "Questions of Fairness: In Search of a Just International Economic Order." (*Foreign Affairs* [10/06], PO Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142)

A problem with Kapstein's position, Wade writes, is the assumption that the empirical evidence on free trade as an engine of efficiency and economic growth is well established. It is not. Kapstein also assumes that there will be harmony between an international social compact based on free trade and domestic social compacts that reflect citizen preferences. In fact, tension is more likely.

Expanding on the last point, Wade adds: "Kapstein and other neoliberal champions [what in the U.S. are called *neoliberals*] sail past this tension by assuming that the optimal degree of openness for all countries--developed and developing--is fully open, and that any disruptions to the domestic social compact can be handled by *social safety nets*. A more plausible view is that the optimal degree of openness varies from country to country, as well as within a single country over time...In any case, justice requires...that there be more leeway for countries to choose how open they will be."

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## Rest in Peace

*John Cort* (1913-2006)

The story of the U.S. Catholic church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century can largely be told against the backdrop of its relationship to communism. Yet even though it has been only 26 years since Lech Walesa shouted *solidarity* inside the Lenin Shipyard, many young adults (including young Polish-Americans) are unaware of communism's influence; not realizing, for example, that the Communist Party was once active in this country. Even middle-aged people associate Catholicism and communism only with an anti-communist Marian devotion or in the context of the Vietnam War. Forgotten is the Catholic struggle for justice within the labor movement in the 1930s and 1940s, when Cort was very influential.

The particulars of Cort's life are further lost amid today's indifference to mediating institutions. In contrast to our TV-centered lifestyle, Cort and his friends attended thousands of little meetings and paid attention to ideological distinctions, including, for example, that between *socialism* and *communism*. Cort, a beautiful writer, cared about grammar, about literary allusions, about small details in a paragraph and even about translations of Latin documents into English. Again by contrast, lots of writing today goes fast and furious through cyberspace with too much carelessness.

Cort graduated cum laude from Harvard University in 1935 with a background in literature and history. He was attracted to Catholicism as an undergrad. In 1936 he heard Dorothy Day (1897-1980)--co-founder of the Catholic Worker--speak in Boston. Cort joined the Catholic Worker, moving to New York City. In the kitchen of the Catholic Worker house, Cort and others formed the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU) in February 1937.

ACTU's purpose, Cort says, was simply to get "Catholic workers to join unions." To that end ACTU assisted CIO membership drives, supported strikes, battled racketeers and sponsored labor schools where workers learned leadership skills and discussed Catholic social thought. At its peak ACTU had 5,500 members in 14 cities, including New York, Pittsburgh and Detroit. Its chapters published hard-hitting newspapers.

It is said that because the Church in Europe lacked a ministry to work, it lost the working class--first to Marxism and now to consumerism. Cort and his friends were determined that the same not happen in the U.S.

The ACTU model did not advocate Catholic unions or Catholic political parties, as did the Church in Europe. The letter *U* in ACTU stood for *unionists*, not *unions*, Cort says. That is, Catholics influence public life not by displaying their Catholicism per se, but by being good union members who happen to meet outside the jobsite for support with fellow Catholics.

During the 1940s, some Catholics accused ACTU of cooperating with communism. Ironically, some historians now say ACTU was so overly anti-communist that it turned the labor movement hopelessly rightward and destroyed the progressive movement in this country. (See *Catholics and Radicals* by Douglas Seaton,

Bucknell University Press [1981], 1200 Route 22 E, Bridgewater, NJ 08807; \$36.50)

Looking back, Cort explains that Catholics and other workers in the 1940s stood to benefit from unions. If Catholicism was indifferent to labor organizing, a door opened to communists, who were eager to use unions for their ideological purpose. During the 1940s, Cort continues, the Communist Party controlled 15 major unions in North America and had great influence within the United Autoworkers Union. And so, ACTU was indeed advocating an *alternative* to communist leadership. It drew upon papal encyclicals, particularly Pope Pius XI's 1931 *Quadragesimo Anno*, to develop its approach.

It is true that in the mid-1940s some ACTU chapters, notably in New York and Pittsburgh, moved beyond creating an alternative inside labor locals to a preoccupation with anti-communism. Cort, however, denies that ACTU is responsible for the loss of a progressive movement in this country. First, the communists of the 1930s and 1940s were not mild socialists or progressive prophets who were planting seeds for reform. They were Stalinists who jeopardized national security. Even Walter Reuther, progressive leader of the UAW, by 1937 saw that the Communist Party was not really on the side of U.S. workers. Further, ACTU was a small organization that could hardly turn a union, much less a whole society, to the right. In fact, ACTU supported progressive social policies, often criticizing AFL and CIO leaders who lost touch with the struggles of ordinary workers. ACTU, Cort concludes, "was a progressive organization, most of whose leaders and members were dedicated to honest democratic trade unionism."

In the mid-1970s Cort began calling himself a "socialist." Some people associate *socialism* with *crazy radicalism* or with *totalitarianism* in the old communist sense. But Cort's socialism comes from a vision of society based on religious principles, not on Marxism. "The papal encyclicals," says Cort, are "clearly anti-capitalist and pro-labor." In fact, says Cort, Pius XI's 1937 *Divini Redemptoris* is perhaps mistranslated into English as *On Atheistic Communism*. "I once analyzed this encyclical

and found that one-quarter of it is devoted to the evils of communism, and three-quarters are devoted to the evils of capitalism... It might well have been entitled *On Atheistic Capitalism*."

Cort was directly involved with unions for over 25 years, both with ACTU and with the Newspaper Guild. Cort found that unions during his time thought about nonviolence in pragmatic terms: Sometimes violence gravely harms the union's image; other times a little violence against scabs can be justified. But for Cort, nonviolence is a non-negotiable religious principle. "Cesar Chavez is the only top labor leader I can recall," says Cort, "who adopted nonviolence as a basic principle and tactic." People forget, Cort writes, that Chavez undertook a long fast not primarily to shame his opponents, but "to discourage the use of violence by members of his union, the United Farm Workers."

In addition to ACTU, Cort was an editor at *Commonweal* from 1943-1959. Over the years he contributed over 400 items to that magazine. In 1962 Cort joined the Peace Corps, serving in the Philippines. Upon his return, Cort directed an anti-poverty program for Massachusetts in cooperation with the Office for Economic Opportunity. He subsequently directed the Model Cities Program in Lynn. All of Cort's public accomplishments were in addition to raising ten children during a 60-year marriage.

In recent years Cort edited *Religious Socialism*, a newsletter of the Democratic Socialists of America (75 Maiden Ln. #505, New York, NY 10038). His autobiography, *Dreadful Conversions* (Fordham University Press [2003], University Box L, Bronx, NY 10458; \$29.95) is terrific spiritual reading. Cort's papers are at Boston College.

Last December Cort sent a note to INITIATIVES: "Just diagnosed with lung cancer, but no problem. I've done most of what I wanted to do. Now it's up to younger people like you. I'm ready to go."

"The best and shortest summary of Catholic social teaching comes from St. Basil," Cort was fond of saying. According to St. Basil, "the coat that hangs in your closet belongs to the poor."