

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

National Center for the Laity
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50 Years since Vatican II

“The enhanced role of the laity [is] the most significant development resulting from Vatican II,” writes Bishop R. Daniel Conlon in the monthly *Christ Is Our Hope* (425 Summit St., Joliet, IL 60435; www.dioceseofjoliet.org). Unfortunately, Vatican II’s teaching on the laity “has been widely misunderstood or misapplied in one significant way and woefully under-implemented in another,” Conlon continues.

As if he takes cues from our National Center for the Laity, Conlon says the misunderstanding occurs when “the enhanced role of the laity” is equated with committees in the parish and extraordinary ministers at Mass. Those involvements arose from and were intended by Vatican II, “but only in a secondary way.” The Council’s primary emphasis was on the laity in the world. This emphasis is not fully implemented.

Conlon quotes Vatican II’s *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*: “The laity by their very vocation seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs... They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life... They are called there by God so that by exercising their proper function and being led by the spirit of the gospel, they can work for the sanctification of the world from within.”

In a supportive reply to Conlon, NCL board member John Hazard agrees that the outward-looking vision of Vatican II should not be limited to parish involvements or even to a weekend social justice effort or a volunteer assignment at a local charity. The lay vocation in Vatican II “belongs to all the laity, all the time,” Hazard writes.

How and where will Catholics learn about Vatican II’s vision? “The parish is one place,” Hazard suggests. However, people are “accustomed to think only of the pastoral care side of parish life,” he says. But “the parish has to encourage and empower us to embrace the call” to be Christians in the world.

Catholic universities and small like-to-like formation groups are other places.

INITIATIVES invites other reactions to Conlon and reports on formation for Christian service in and to the world.

Taking the Initiative

With a Theology of Work

“Theologians have seldom treated work as a central category or organizing concept,” writes John Knapp of Mann Center for Ethics and Leadership (800 Lakeshore Dr. #DBH 326, Birmingham, AL 35229; www.samford.edu/manncenter) in *How the Church Fails Businesspeople--and What Can Be Done About It* (Eerdmans Publishing [2012], 2140 Oak Industrial Dr. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505; \$15). An inadequate theology of work leads to a breach between the institutional Church and the daily experience of businesspeople or of workers in general.

Reformation theology as processed through Enlightenment philosophy led to ambivalence between the Church and business. The Church is uncomfortable with the extremes of Enlightenment individualism. So the Church sometimes scolds business for its commercialism, consumerism and impersonal conduct. Or aware that it stays afloat to the degree that its members do well, the Church tiptoes “around the subject [of business], except when necessary to raise the annual Church budget,” Knapp writes. Both the Church and businesspeople buy into the Enlightenment’s separation of secular from sacred, temporal from eternal and public from private, he observes.

The Church does teach business ethics, says Knapp. But too often it only talks about personal ethics without helping businesspeople inside imperfect systems.

For starters, Knapp calls for an inclusive notion of *vocation*. He, like our National Center for the Laity, is annoyed when Church employees laud businesspeople that “have left careers to join the clergy or work in a mission field.” Why doesn’t the Church appreciate that God wants competent businesspeople?

Knapp makes few Catholic references in his book. He likely however would be pleased with *Vocation of the Business Leader*, a 28-page document from Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (Palazzo san Calisto, Vatican City 00120; www.bit.ly/businessleadervocation).

This remarkable document speaks directly to Knapp's observation of a split between faith and daily life. To put the two together, *Vocation of the Business Leader* suggests the old *observe-judge-act* method, names social principles, and considers four big business topics: global economy, communication technology, finance-driven economy and cultural changes.

Business is not a neutral activity, says *Vocation of the Business Leader*. Nor is it, contrary to some corporate mission statements, enough to espouse ten or a dozen vacuous values. Business at its best actively enhances "the development of virtue."

One of the document's themes is the *social mortgage* attached to all natural and developed resources.

Business leaders can make detrimental short-term decisions, the document warns, unless they know that "in a world of instant gratification and overabundance of information...the urgent can drive out the important." Along this line, it quotes Pope Benedict XVI: A global economy "makes us neighbors but does not make us brothers [and sisters]."

INITIATIVES circulated *Vocation of the Business Leader* to businesspeople, asking their reaction. Their responses were positive, but all mentioned that its writing style is indirect, verbose, quite repetitive and lacking in specifics. Several businesspeople also noted the document's frequent use of the word *men*. While gender inclusive language can be overdone, this document is 50 years out of step, adding an unnecessary barrier to its reception.

"It is not the place of the Church to prescribe in detail the actions of business leaders," *Vocation of the Business Leader* correctly states. Yet those surveyed by INITIATIVES say the document does not appreciate the tension between principles and practical decisions.

In a sense *Vocation of the Business Leader* burdens *individual* business leaders with too much responsibility, some INITIATIVES' readers say. For example, according to the document business leaders "must find ways to make a just distribution of...wealth to employees

(following the principle of the right to a just wage)." Then in a rare reference to unions, it says workers should "supplement the company's efforts" in paying a living wage only *after* the company tries to achieve it. However, according to Catholic doctrine, workers' participation in a company--including through collective bargaining--is not a concession or a fallback strategy. The first purpose of a company, says Catholicism, is the development of the worker. Suppliers, customers and community members also have a natural stake in the company. (See *Pope John Paul II's Gospel of Work*, National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$8)

Finally and respectfully, INITIATIVES' readers stress that adult formation is ultimately the responsibility of baptized laity, supporting and challenging one another in their daily understanding of faith in today's world. The *observe-judge-act* method (suggested in the document) is a sophisticated process for small *groups*. It is not enough for an *individual* businessperson to read and even act upon a Church document.

To be continued with comment on *Please God, Let There Be Another Boom* by Grant McDowell (Westbow Press [2011], 1663 Liberty Dr., Bloomington, IN 47403; \$13.99) and on *Work Matters: Lessons from Scripture* by R. Paul Stevens (Eerdmans Publishing [2012], 2140 Oak Industrial Dr., Grand Rapids, MI 49505; \$16).

Taking the Initiative For Business Ethics

The mid-1970s to mid-1980s were boom years for business ethics publications, seminars and courses. Undergraduate business majors and graduate students in business were routinely required to take a course entirely devoted to ethics. Unfortunately, write Diane Swanson and Dann Fisher, the "trend was reversed in the 1990s." The two, leaders in Business Ethics Education Initiative (18D Calvin Hall, Manhattan, KS 66502; www.cba.ksu.edu), fault the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (777 S. Harbour Island Blvd., Tampa, FL 33602; www.aacsb.edu), an accrediting body.

In 1991 AACSB moved away from requiring a specific ethics course in business programs. Instead, universities were encouraged to cover ethics in the context of each course. The

result, albeit unintended, is students who lack a foundation for thinking ethically and teachers who might acknowledge the importance of ethics without explaining the *whys* and the *hows*. This new approach, say Swanson and Fisher, “usually adds up to very little coherent coverage.”

Swanson and Fisher dismiss those who say ethics cannot be taught. By that logic, schools should close because the statement would apply to finance, auditing, accounting or any other discipline. Obviously, someone who excels in an ethics course might be a crook on the job, just as someone who passes a journalism course might be a lousy reporter. But a study of ethics enhances the character formation that also comes through reading and through experience.

Swanson and Fisher list a few strong ethics programs, including those at Benedictine University and Georgetown University.

AACSB is reviewing accreditation standards and invites comments at www.aacsb.edu/brc/contact.asp. Swanson and Fisher suggest lobbying for required ethics courses. (*CR Magazine* [4/12], 343 Thronall St. #515, Edison, NJ 08837)

Taking the Initiative *On the Environment*

Pope Benedict XVI is repeatedly talking and writing about stewardship for the environment. His thoughts on this topic are compiled in *The Environment* (Our Sunday Visitor [2012], 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750; \$14.95).

Some will dismiss whatever a Catholic leader says about this topic because Christianity, in their opinion, is a destroyer of the environment. The Christian theme of *dominion* over the “fish of the sea and the birds of the air,” the argument goes, is a human-centered worldview that tramples on the natural world. This argument, however, fails to recognize that Christianity balances *dominion* with *stewardship*, insisting that people are part of the natural world and must care for the earth’s resources.

“The environment is God’s gift to everyone,” Benedict XVI writes, “and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole.” Dominion, therefore, is not a license to do whatever one pleases. People are called to oversee the planet’s resources and to steward them wisely for legitimate needs. At

the same time, Benedict XVI adds, it is wrong “to view nature as something more important than the human person... Our duties toward the environment are linked to our duties toward the human person... It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the others.”

In response to another criticism of Catholicism, Benedict XVI says it is simplistic to think that mandatory limits on family size will solve all ecological problems. An approach to specific problems lies in how people understand the relationship between humankind and the world we inhabit.

For starters INITIATIVES’ readers can sign the *St. Francis Pledge* at Catholic Climate Covenant (PO Box 60205, Washington, DC 20039; www.catholicclimatecovenant.org).

Other resources include the Summer 2012 issue of *The Company We Keep* (Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, 475 Riverside Dr. #1842, New York, NY 10115; www.iccr.org) with five articles on the environment, including farming and land use. Also try *Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-Christian Tradition* (ITEST [2010], 20 Archbishop May Dr. #3400A, St. Louis, MO 63119; www.faithscience.org) and *The Divine Dynamic* by Fr. John Surette, SJ (Acta Publications [2010], 4848 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60640; 14.95).

Taking the Initiative *In Labor Relations*

Catholic doctrine on labor relations is historically contingent, claims Fr. Robert Sirico (Acton Institute, 161 Ottawa Ave. NW #301, Grand Rapids, MI 49503; www.robertsirico.com). The doctrine supported unions in the late 1890s when “people were being brutalized.” But work is humane today, he opines, so the doctrine does not apply.

Sirico’s comments are directed against the part-time faculty at Duquesne University (600 Forbes Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15282) who expect their Catholic institution and its religious order, Spiritans USA (6230 Brush Run Rd., Bethel Park, PA 15102), to practice Catholicism. In May the school administration, responding to a successful card-signing campaign among the teachers, agreed to an election procedure. Then the school changed its mind. It fired its attorney and, contrary to doctrine, hired a union-busting consultant from Tennessee. (*N.Y. Times*, 6/23/12)

Vincent Miller of the University of Dayton corrects Sirico: Catholic “support for unions is based on natural law.” Like other matters of Catholic doctrine, it does not change by “any relativistic read” of current events. Although he is “well financed” and frequently quoted, Sirico “apparently doesn’t know what he’s talking about,” Miller concludes. (www.americamagazine.org, 6/23/12) (Contrary to several citations, Sirico is not a Paulist Father.)

Meanwhile the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis is moving its newspaper, *Catholic Spirit* (244 Dayton Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102), into its Office of Communication. However, the contract of the paper’s 13 workers and their bargaining unit through the Minnesota Newspaper Guild are not part of the transition. The *Catholic Spirit*’s Guild was organized in 1965. If the archbishop busts the union, it will be replaced by “a non-negotiable employment agreement.” (*Workday Minnesota* [6/18/12], 321 19th Ave. S. #3-300, Minneapolis, MN 55455; www.workdayminnesota.org & *The Union Advocate* [7/12], 411 Main St. #202, St. Paul, MN 55102)

The U.S. Catholic bishops met in Atlanta this June. In a near-unanimous vote, they approved a forthcoming statement to be titled *Catholic Reflections on Work, Poverty and a Broken Economy*. Its purpose “is to raise up the principles of the church,” says Bishop Stephen Blaire (212 N. San Joaquin St., Stockton, CA 95202). The new statement will build upon the bishops’ 1986 letter, *Economic Justice for All*, he says. (*Catholic News Service* [6/13/12], 3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017)

The 1986 documents says this: “All Church institutions must also fully recognize the rights of employees to organize and bargain collectively with the institution through whatever association or organization they freely choose.” In implementing this and other Catholic principles, the bishops say, Catholic institutions must be “exemplary.”

So how can lay Catholics and others take any part of our profound and precious doctrine seriously, if bishops and other Church employees in Pittsburgh, St. Paul and elsewhere casually and publically violate that very doctrine?

For its part, the National Center for the Laity (PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629) distributes a booklet, *Catholic Administrators and Labor Unions* (\$2.50). Based on conversations with administrators, it outlines

principles for excellence in the face of a union campaign. For more on Catholic labor doctrine, read *Pope John Paul II’s Gospel of Work* by Bill Droel (NCL; \$7.50).

Another resource on this topic is the Catholic Employer Project (www.catholiclabor.org). It features up-to-the-minute labor relations stories, including an extensive list of Catholic institutions that harmoniously engage in collective bargaining.

Taking the Initiative For Veterans

Bertel Smith, an Army veteran of the Vietnam War, is a leader in Veterans Employment Project (6212 S. Sangamon St., Chicago, IL 60621; www.catholiccharities.net/veterans). He coaches vets in job search skills, develops leads among employers and mentors workers. Some of the vets live in one of three Catholic Charities facilities.

We Honor Veterans (1731 King St. #100, Alexandria, VA 22314; www.wehonorveterans.org) is a resource for families and professionals who assist vets in the last stages of life. Hospices are encouraged to connect with WHV in order to better serve patients who have served our country.

Return and Recovery (PO Box 882, Appleton, WI 54912; www.artistsforthehumanities.org) uses group sessions and art therapy to help vets process their military experience. Meetings are held in various Wisconsin locations, including Norbertine Center for Spirituality (1016 N. Broadway, De Pere, WI 54115). (*Our Sunday Visitor* [5/27/12 & 7/1/12], 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750)

From the Great Workbench

Take workers off the clock, says Frank Partnoy in *Wait: the Art and Science of Delay* (Public Affairs [2012], 1094 Flex Dr., Jackson, TN 38301; \$26.99). The 58% of paid workers who punch a clock are more stressed on and off the job, have lower morale and exhibit less creativity. “Hourly wages are increasingly common among the middle class and in upwardly mobile professions, including law, accounting, consulting and medicine,” he writes. It is possible to set a standard fee for types of cases, procedures and tasks. Some will take less

time, some more. But overall the firm will be more productive and workers more fulfilled.

Agree? Do INITIATIVES' readers have positive experience with hourly wages?

Work and Art

Arthur Miller (1915-2005) wrote his commentary on work, *Death of a Salesman* (Penguin Classics, 375 Hudson St., New York, NY 10014; \$13), in 1949. It has been staged continuously ever since, most recently at Barrymore Theatre (243 W. 47th St., New York, NY 10036). This production was directed by Mike Nichols and starred Philip Seymour Hoffman. It is a 2012 Tony Award winner for "best revival of a play" and "best direction."

Death of a Salesman is not suddenly relevant because of the current recession, writes Rob Weinert Kendt. The play touched souls even during periods of prosperity. "We return to great works for pleasures quite apart from how well they reflect us and our time, and that a classic play will nearly always strike us as relevant and, yes, universal," he concludes. "This is the definition of a classic." (*America* [5/21/12], 106 W. 56th St., New York, NY 10019)

At the same time, the setting for *Death of a Salesman* is work within a capitalist system. Willy Loman's delusion and emptiness are byproducts of his investment in capitalism's promise of success and esteem, say the editors of *Commonweal* (475 Riverside Dr. #405, New York, NY 10115; 6/1/12). No other mediating institution and "certainly no religious community" provide alternative values in Loman's world.

Market values have taken over more areas of life since *Death of a Salesman* was first staged. According to Michael Sandel in *What Money Can't Buy: the Moral Limits of Markets* (Farrar, Straus [2012], 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10019; \$27), access to health care, education, leisure, family life and the environment--things that once by common sense were outside monetary value--are now governed by financial incentives, buying exceptions for otherwise second-rate behavior, upgrades for those who can pay, so-called *naming rights*, and dollar values for love, care and neighborliness. The notion of *goods held in common*, things unavailable to individual customers, is disappearing. A phrase like *spirituality of work* nowhere makes sense--probably not even in church.

Christians, by definition, believe in redemption and hope. So where and how within this advanced global economy can salesmen (machinists, lawyers, dockworkers, finance managers) be aware of their innate dignity and even find transcendent meaning in work?

120+ Years

Of Catholic Social Thought

Although the Supreme Court upholds the Affordable Health Care Act, debate on the proper role of government and specifically on religious freedom is hardly closed. Unfortunately, 30-second sound bites and simplistic slogans are not reasoned arguments. Circumstances on the ground are complex. Catholic social teaching is valuable in this and other public debates. Its general principles, of course, have to be applied by laypeople within their competency as citizens, human resource specialists, insurance executives, hospital managers, municipal officials, non-profit directors, union negotiators, homemakers and more. Drawing upon their faith, clergy, religious and laypeople must rely on persuasion and collective action to influence policies and behavior. Religious truth confers no additional authority to enforce laws or policies on our citizenry.

Two recent books contribute to understanding the historical, political and sociological context for Catholic engagement with public life: *Catholicism and Democracy: An Essay in the History of Political Thought* by Emile Perreau-Saussine (Princeton University Press [2012], 1445 Lower Ferry Rd., Ewing, NJ 08618; \$45) and *Subsidiarity Governance: Theoretical and Empirical Models* edited by Alessandro Colombo (Palgrave [2012], 175 Fifth Ave. #200, New York, NY 10010; \$85).

Catholicism and Democracy is of particular interest because it describes how the church viewed its relationship to the state during Vatican I (1869-1870). It then describes "the new role of the laity" and the church's embrace of religious freedom as central to Catholic doctrine.

Subsidiarity Governance defines the principle: "In all forms of human coexistence no organization must dominate other weaker or smaller ones in the exercise of the latter's functions. On the contrary, the moral duty of larger and more powerful social bodies is to bring help to the smaller ones in the fulfillment

of aspirations freely determined at the smaller level, rather than imposed from above... Subsidiarity implies that political structures, such as the nation-state or regional governments, should only intervene when this is necessary to protect the common good and to perform those tasks that cannot be carried out at a more immediate or local level.”

The book describes and analyzes European examples, particularly in Lombardy, of subsidiarity applied to education, health services and housing. Two contributors are from the U.S.: Charles Gless of Boston University and Lester Salamon of John Hopkins University.

Catholic social principles—*subsidiarity, the common good, option for the poor, solidarity* and more—are valuable, keeping in mind that they are complementary. Isolating one to argue for a specific social policy is a mistake. Further and to repeat, it is informed lay people who apply general principles inside the messy circumstances of daily life.

North American Spirituality

Daniel Rudd (1854-1933)

U.S. Catholic history is usually the story of bishops and priests. Now and then there is a biography of a Catholic layperson, usually someone wealthy and/or a politician. Rudd was not a bishop, priest or Church employee and not wealthy. In fact, as a child he was a slave. It is remarkable then that a full biography and an appreciative essay now appear: *A Cry for Justice* by Gary Agee (University of Arkansas Press [2011], 105 N. McIlroy Ave., Fayetteville, AR 72701; \$39.95) and “Daniel Rudd: Civil Rights Leader” by Sr. LaReine Marie Mosely, SND (*American Catholic Studies* [#4, 2011], St. Mary’s Hall, 800 Lancaster Ave., Villanova, PA 19085).

Rudd was founding publisher in 1886 of *American Catholic Tribune*, an 1889 founder of what is now National Black Catholic Congress (320 Cathedral St. #300, Baltimore, MD 21201; www.nbccongress.org), a participant in the 1889

Baltimore Lay Congress and its subsequent 1893 Columbian Catholic Congress.

On every page of the *Tribune* newspaper (which was steadily published for over 11 years, reaching a 10,000 circulation including blacks and whites) Rudd tirelessly opposed Jim Crow laws and prejudicial attitudes. Rudd travelled extensively, giving talks. He campaigned for women’s rights, for hiring of qualified blacks and even home rule for Ireland. He took specific action for school integration (including Catholic schools); never satisfied with the “separate but equal” formula.

Agee situates Rudd among late 19th century U.S. Catholic leaders who believed that U.S. culture was conducive to Catholicism and that, in turn, Catholicism could make a unique contribution to our culture. Additionally said Rudd, “there could be no greater factor in solving the race problem than that matchless institution,” the Roman Catholic church.

Agee devotes a chapter to Bishop John Ireland (1838-1918) of St. Paul, whom Rudd admired. Here’s Ireland at 1889 Baltimore Lay Congress: “Despite its defects and its mistakes, I love my age. I love its aspirations and its resolves. I revel in its feats of valor, its industries, and its discoveries. I thank it for its many benefactions to my fellow man, to the people rather than to princes and rulers. I seek no backward voyage across the sea of time. I will ever press forward. I believe that God intends the future to be better than the present.” (*American Catholic Lay Groups* by Deirdre Moloney, University of North Carolina Press [2002], PO Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515; \$27.95)

Like everyone who campaigns for civil rights, Rudd had disappointments. He alternately tried normal political and legal institutions, then lobbied through an outside group (often the church), and even advocated self-determination for blacks. Thanks to a stable family life and to an integrated experience in his childhood parish of St. Joseph Proto-Cathedral (PO Box 548, Bardstown, KY 40004), Rudd never gave up on the cause or on his faith.

Happenings

“Issues Raised by Concepts of Early Human Life” is an October 12-14, 2012 forum sponsored by Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology (20 Archbishop May Dr. #3400A, St. Louis, MO 63119; www.earlylifeissues2012.com).

The Cardinal Suenens Center (20700 N. Park Blvd., University Heights, OH 44118; www.jcu.edu/suenens) joins the list of institutions hosting Vatican II anniversary events. This one, to occur October 5-7, 2012, will

exclusively focus on the “laity 50 years after Vatican II.” Fittingly, all the principal speakers are lay people, including National Center for the Laity advisor Peggy Steinfels.

Our National Center for the Laity is one of the sponsors of a March 21-23, 2013 conference commemorating the 1963 encyclical *Peace on Earth* by Pope John XXIII (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$6). Conference speakers include Amina Rasul of Philippine Center for Islam Democracy and Ken Butigan of Pace e Bene. To register or for more information: Center for Social Concerns (Geddes Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556; www.socialconcerns.nd.edu).

Kim Bobo (Interfaith Worker Justice, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago, IL 60660; www.iwj.org) is the 2012 recipient of the prestigious Pacem in Terris Peace and Freedom Award (780 W. Central Park Ave., Davenport, IA 52804). Bobo was a founder of IWJ in 1996. It maintains a network of about 50 regional groups that link religious leaders with labor issues and unions. It also networks a growing number of worker centers that assist the underemployed. IWJ sponsors a program to promote Labor Day in churches and conducts a summer school for seminarians interested in work-related topics.

John Carr retires after 25 years as a top public policy advisor to our U.S. Catholic bishops. He consistently defended Catholic doctrine on support for the poor, the dignity of each life and the quest for peace, while weathering the unavoidable controversy encountered by anyone faithful to the gospel. Carr tells INITIATIVES that he now plans to focus on lay formation and the application of Catholic principles in daily life.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) contributed about 700 articles to the *Catholic Worker* newspaper (36 E. First St., New York, NY 10003). All are now on the web (www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday, along with Day’s books. Phil Runkel and more than 80 volunteers have made all of this readily accessible.

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“Those who instruct many in justice will shine as bright as stars for all eternity.” –Daniel 12:3

