

Initiatives

In Support of Christians in the World

National Center for the Laity
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50 Years since Vatican II

The Allies declared victory in Europe in May 1945. During the subsequent recovery church leaders faced challenges: Can damaged church buildings be repaired? How is mercy extended to those who collaborated with the enemy? What is the best response to communist materialism? How can the church retain young adults? And more fundamentally, where was God during the war? Maybe the world is evil? These questions and more were part of the context at Vatican II (1962-1965).

Not only European Catholics, but those in the U.S. as well as leaders in other religious traditions struggled with post-War reality. Dorothy Sayers (1893-1957), an Anglican, believed that the correct course will be established only with a proper “Christian understanding of work.” Equipped with a sound theology of work, pastoral leaders can communicate that “the secular vocation, as such, is sacred.” Otherwise, “the greater part of the world’s intelligent workers [will] become irreligious, or at least uninterested in religion.”

Sayers explained her analysis in a talk, “Why Work?” which was later included in a book, *Creed or Chaos* (1949; out of print).

Instead of engaging the world of work, she said, “the official Church wastes time and energy, and moreover commits sacrilege in demanding that secular workers should neglect their proper vocation in order to do Christian work—by which [the Church] means ecclesiastical work.” Pastoral leaders distract young workers by asking them to attend in-house meetings and volunteer at carnivals. The official Church puts work and religion in “separate departments, and is astonished to find that, as a result, the secular world is turned to purely selfish and destructive ends.”

Vatican II said much of the same. Baptism, not Church involvement, confers Christian competence and responsibility for the world. Everyone has a vocation to be holy. A separation between weekend worship and daily work “deserves to be counted among the most serious errors of our age.”

Attention Readers

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Taking the Initiative

In Business

John A. Ryan Institute (2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105; www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst) is a leader in connecting Catholic doctrine to the business world. It is part of Mike Naughton’s empire at University of St. Thomas. The Institute and related departments promote the presentation of Catholic ideas across the curriculum, sponsor local and international conferences on business ethics, collaborate with other schools on resources and facilitate a select group of juniors and seniors interested in Catholic leadership. (About 30 of those students recently came to Chicago to meet with NCL leaders.)

The Institute’s latest booklet is *Respect in Action* (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$2). A company can have an inspiring mission statement, a 200-page code of conduct and a socially sensitive public relations department. Yet the company can still attract petty, authoritarian managers who narrowly focus on short-term monetary goals. *Respect in Action* says this management style steals dignity from its workers, both its executives and its other employees. It is not healthy for the company and is morally wrong.

Respect in Action suggests that the principle of *subsidiarity* be put into “the practices, policies and structures of a company.” The principle comes from Catholic patrimony, but any institution can practice it. A book title defines subsidiarity as *No Bigger Than Necessary* by Fr. Andrew Greeley (1928-2013). A comparable rendering might be: A decision is best made as close as possible to those affected

by the decision. For example, a national retail chain has been criticized because the corporate office controls the heat and air conditioning in all its stores; one setting for all. One company with many outlets programs the in-store music from corporate; one play list for all. That's rigid procedural bureaucracy; not subsidiarity.

A humane company that acts on subsidiarity does not mean forsaking "authority and accountability," says *Respect in Action*. There is a natural tension between the creative gifts of workers and the overall good. An intelligent manager will encourage employee decisions, appreciating that they have affection for the company's mission and within their perspective are as concerned and dedicated as any boss. Further, employees can uniquely have knowledge about, let's say, efficiency of the floor layout, of a delivery company's habits, of a supplier's quality and lots more.

Obviously, one manager acting alone cannot change corporate culture. Likewise, one business that takes a long view could lose to its competitor, at least initially. To effect change an excellent manager must team with others inside the company. Likewise, a company must team with others in their industry or sector, collaborating with integrity through trade and professional associations and the like. Leaders who embrace subsidiarity, concludes *Respect in Action*, strive to design good work, make good products or offer good services. They also "enlarge the possibilities for full human development at work."

Taking the Initiative *For the Family*

This year marks the 50th anniversary of a famous piece of social science analysis. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (1927-2003) was principal author of *The Negro Family: the Case for National Action* (U.S. Department of Labor; www.dol.gov). Moynihan pointed to the breakup of poor families, relating that reality to "the spread of crime and unrest [and other problems] in the cities."

The report's 53 pages were controversial from the start and it was soon shelved under accusations of racism. Only recently is it given critical examination.

"The liberal denunciations of Moynihan were terribly unfair," writes Nicholas Kristof (*N.Y. Times*, 3/12/15). Not only liberals, says *America* (106 W. 56th St., New York, NY 10019;

6/15/15). "Moynihan's report was misunderstood by both the left and the right." "The onslaught of misleading attacks on the report and its author" were a mistake, says Peter Steinfelds. "Moynihan was right in broaching the delicate subject of the relationship of family breakdown and poverty." (*Commonweal*, 475 Riverside Dr. #405, New York, NY 10115; 4/10/15)

Liberals shouldn't deny that poverty is linked to bad personal choices about family arrangement and about drugs or school, Kristof writes. Yet "the conservative narrative of human weakness" is too simple. As if, he continues, "it is all about personal responsibility... [Just] stop whining and get a job." (*N.Y. Times*, 6/14/15)

Kristof refers to an "important book," *Scarcity: Why Having So Little Means So Much* by Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir (Picador [2013], 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010; \$17). The book links economic poverty to stress which then leads to short term decisions aimed at immediate needs. Those less-than-optimal decisions perpetuate the poverty.

Moynihan was not writing about race per se. His concern was poverty. In 1965 the increasing abandonment of marriage among blacks caught Moynihan's attention. He saw that this related to (did not directly cause, please note) poverty. Today, the majority of poor and working-class couples in all racial and ethnic groups forego the institution of marriage. And while an alarming number of black children have unmarried parents, their fathers are not totally absent, as details Charles Blow. Drawing upon *All In: How Our Work-First Culture Fails Dads* by Josh Levs (Harper Collins [2015], 53 Glenmura Intern Blvd., Moosic, PA 18507; \$25.99), Blow says the majority of black fathers live with their children. In some situations though the father is not home because of an early death, incarceration or because his children have different mothers and he "can live in one home at a time...with some but not all of his children." (*N.Y. Times*, 6/8/15)

Whatever the individual arrangement, the children in non-married households have more health issues, are lagging educationally and are overly represented in social service agencies and in juvenile court, explains Robert Putnam. To repeat: Many factors are at play. A household headed by a non-married couple or a single-parent household "is not an *uncaused first cause*" of poverty, he writes. (*Our Kids*, Simon & Schuster [2015], 1230 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020; \$28)

Moynihan, raised by a single-mom in New York's Hell's Kitchen, was hardly naïve enough to think poverty will be magically reduced because more couples are somehow cajoled to walk up the church aisle or visit a justice of the peace. He lobbied for job creation and outlined a measured approach to government programs.

As long as we're talking about responsibility, Kristof concludes, let's start with "a collective responsibility to provide more of a fair start in life to all, so that children aren't propelled toward bad choices." We need "to stop making excuses for our own self-destructive behaviors as a society."

The Vatican-sponsored World Synod on the Family continues with a companion Family Congress (www.worldmeeting2015.org) September 22-27, 2015 in Philadelphia, where Pope Francis will speak on Saturday evening. It makes sense to use these events to talk about the correlation between a family's structure and its economic prospects, and then for faithful people to take action.

Taking the Initiative *In Health Care*

Medicine is addicted to multiplying tests and procedures. This is the primary cause of extreme health care delivery costs, says Atul Gawande, a surgeon and author of best-selling *Being Mortal* (Henry Holt [2014], 175 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010; \$26). Drawing upon *Less Medicine More Health* by Gilbert Welch (Beacon Press [2015], 24 Fransworth St., Boston, MA 02210; \$24.95), Gawande argues that many tests are unnecessary and their overuse can make conditions worse.

Doctors are "far more concerned about doing too little than doing too much," he writes. Plus, they are in a huge system premised on fee-per-service which determines a doctor's ability to pay her office rent, her staff, her liability insurance and her children's college bills. In addition some doctors have a financial interest in a lab or other supporting agency. But patients are in the mix too. We "like to believe that, as with most things, more is better," says Gawande.

In 2009 Gawande made his case in a visit to McAllen, TX where costs were particularly high.

Why in McAllen? Even though our nationwide insurance system rewards doctors "for quantity of care," a similar Texas city "had

half the per-capita Medicare costs and the same or better results." It turns out that McAllen doctors were into "a profit-maximizing medical culture." A large number of them owned stakes in agencies, centers and hospitals that provided tests. Others simply went along.

Gawande, again looking at McAllen, crunches current stats. He finds that the "cost of a Medicare patient has flattened across the country," particularly in McAllen. TV and newspapers there followed-up on his 2009 investigation and "federal prosecutions cracked down on outright fraud." More importantly, conscientious doctors, after a discussion with staff or colleagues, changed their routines.

Gawande is now able to identify the most likely reform agent. It is not the government and its unending requirements. It is not insurance companies. Nor, surprisingly, is it chiefly top-paid surgeons and specialists. All those entities must help the situation. But, it is "primary-care doctors who don't even seem to recognize the impact of what they've been doing," who with openness to collective thought and action can best achieve reform. By doing so, Gawande contends, they will also recover their original calling.

Some McAllen doctors have joined Well Med (8637 Fredericksburg Rd. #360, San Antonio, TX 78240). It is a buffer company standing between the primary physician and the insurance entities. These types of buffers arrange with Medicaid or Medicare to reward the doctor for quality care, not simply for ordering lots of tests. A doctor can even get a bonus. In the case of private insurance companies the buffer sells a special plan to a business. The employee policy costs less if workers use, in this case, a Well Med doctor.

Now, patients are not happy if a doctor sweeps them out the door. Well Med (and other similar companies) train doctors to take time with patients: This is why this pill is taken in these intervals; why our nurse or assistant wants results of your home testing when she calls tomorrow, and more. In one example the doctor spent 45 minutes with a diabetic patient, followed by another 45 minutes with the doctor's certified assistant.

About 20% of Medicare patients now see a doctor who is paid through one or another buffer company. Gawande admits there is a "point where conservative care becomes inadequate care." For him the caution is balanced against "an entire health-care system [that] has been devoted to this game" of running up costs

through unnecessary tests and procedures. (*The New Yorker*, 4 Times Sq., New York, NY 10036; 5/11/15 & 6/1/09)

Taking the Initiative *Among Farm Workers*

Cesar Chavez (1927-1993), a founder of United Farmworkers Union (PO Box 62, Keene, CA 93531; www.ufw.org), was ambivalent about labor unions. In 1954 he was hired by the Industrial Areas Foundation (637 S. Dearborn #100, Chicago, IL 60605) to assist Fred Ross (1910-1992) in coalescing Mexican-American civic leaders in several California towns into chapters of Community Service Organization. IAF supported CSO and the two organizers for about ten years.

In 1962 Chavez turned his attention to Filipino and Mexican farmworkers. The “main purpose” of their new effort, he told Dolores Huerta, a CSO leader who joined him, is “collective bargaining contracts with employers.”

However like other crusaders, Chavez sometimes lost interest in the details of servicing and renegotiating contracts. Instead, he began many service projects, including a second-hand store, then a credit union, and eventually two strip malls. Some evenings like a precinct captain he would sit at a small table and listen to individual family and work situations. Chavez consistently supported this *problem clinic* approach within UFW. (*The Crusades of Cesar Chavez* by Miriam Pawel, Bloomsbury Press [2014], 1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018; \$22)

Today’s *worker centers* draw upon Chavez’ *problem clinics*. They are not unions and thus not legally restricted in the tactics they use.

For example, Migrant Justice (294 N. Winooski Ave. #130, Burlington, VT 05401; www.migrantjustice.net) is in discussion with Ben & Jerry’s (300 Community Dr., South Burlington, VT 05403) about conditions among the 1,500 migrant dairy workers in their state, reports Steven Greenhouse (*N.Y. Times*, 7/4/15). Rather than establish contracts with the farms, Migrant Justice counts on Ben & Jerry’s to sign onto its Milk with Dignity program. That means all the cream suppliers for Cherry Garcia or Karamel Sutra establish fair working conditions. Some suppliers, like St. Albans Creamery (140

Federal St., St. Albans City, VT 05478) are disposed, others are reluctant.

INITIATIVES has long followed Coalition of Immokalee Workers (PO Box 603, Immokalee, FL 34143; www.ciw-online.org), a successful worker center. Using targeted consumer boycotts and rallies, CIW gets major fast food chains and groceries to join its Fair Food Certification. The stores get their suppliers to raise a worker’s pay by a penny per pound of tomatoes. CIW currently wants INITIATIVES’ readers to lobby Publix (3300 Publix Pkwy., Lakeland, FL 33811), a grocery chain.

Worker centers usually develop a problem clinic program, maybe legal help on back wages or referrals. In addition to farmworkers some worker centers assist janitors, nannies, cooks, especially people not covered by Federal protections. Interfaith Worker Justice (1020 W. Bryn Mawr, Chicago, IL 60660; www.iwj.org) is a hub for some worker centers.

Taking the Initiative *On Campus*

The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (1 DuPont Cr. NW #650, Washington, DC 20036; www.accunet.org) has a task force on Catholic social teaching. To connect with it, get *Vision of Justice: Catholic Social Teaching on Campus* (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$10).

The book explains the task force mission, provides some history of U.S. Catholic thought, treats a few issues (environment, poverty, peace) and, using case studies, it details the application of Catholic doctrine across the curriculum.

“It is quite possible for students at Catholic colleges and universities to complete their entire education without ever learning anything about [Catholic social doctrine],” say Ron Pagnucco & Susan Crawford Sullivan, editors of *Vision of Justice*. That’s unfortunate because those graduates enter a marketplace where *relative utility* is the dominant philosophy and work, despite lofty corporate mission statements, is often not arranged to sustain a vocation.

Taking the Initiative *Among Immigrants*

Ruprecht Co. (1301 Allanson Rd., Mundelein, IL 60060) is the oldest beef processor in the Chicago area. Ruprecht's first *core value* admirably says "employees are the cornerstone of our success."

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (500 12th St. SW, Washington, DC 20536) is conducting an I9 audit of Ruprecht; that is, inspecting the company's work eligibility files. In other recent I9 audits, many workers have been laid off (not necessarily deported) once the government leaves the plant. It so happens that contract negotiations between Ruprecht and about 100 workers there are stalled. Dan Abraham explains to INITIATIVES that his Unite One (218 S. Wabash Ave. #700, Chicago, IL 60604; www.unitehere1.org) represents the 100 butchers; another union represents the 200 cooks and processors.

Overcome by rumors, nervous workers recently walked out of the plant and caucused for about two and one-half hours, reports Yana Kunichoff. They then "demanded the company show them the [ICE] requests for their documents." Arise (1436 W. Randolph #202, Chicago, IL 60607), a coalition of religious and labor leaders, is assisting the workers. (*In These Times* [7/9/15], 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647 and *Crain's Chicago Business* [6/26/15], 150 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601)

INITIATIVES thinks back to May 2008 when another meatpacking plant was raided; this one in Postville, IA. It was the largest for kosher beef. Workers were deported. The plant's CEO subsequently went to jail for fraud and the company was eventually sold to Agri Star (210 276 Midpark Way SE, Calgary, AB T2X 1J6 Canada). The new owner uses cyber-tools to verify the eligibility of its workers. Wages are lower than before. The workforce is more transitory; some commute a long distance, others work seasonally.

Today the area churches, like St. Paul Lutheran (116 E. Military Rd., Postville, IA 52162), continue to serve the community. So do town officials and others. However, Postville has lost about half its population since 2008.

President Barack Obama (White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20500) is known for numerous deportations. For the record: the previous administration sent more

people back to Mexico, but called them *returns*; meaning no fingerprints, no marks on their immigration record. Obama recently instructed Jeh Johnson (Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC 20528) and his agents to focus on criminals and terrorist threats, not so much on dependable workers, even though some of them might lack proper documents. (*The New Republic* [4/17/14], 525 Ninth St. NW #600, Washington, DC 20004; and Migration Policy Institute, 1400 16th St. NW #300, Washington, DC 20036; www.migrationpolicy.org; plus *The New Yorker* [7/17/15], 1 World Trade Center, New York, NY 10007)

Taking the Initiative *Among Teachers*

About four years ago the adjunct instructors at St. Xavier University (3700 W. 103rd St., Chicago, IL 60655) invited NCL to speak with them about Catholic doctrine on labor relations. It was awkward. The Sisters of Mercy (7262 Mercy Rd., Omaha, NE 68124) sponsor the school. NCL admires them for their leadership in education and their support for good causes, including affordable housing, opposition to trafficking and promotion of human rights in Honduras. Plus, Mercy sisters taught your INITIATIVES' editor to read.

The St. Xavier administration argues that all its adjunct teachers perform a religious function. NCL agrees that in some sense all employees of a Catholic institution advance the mission of Christ, even those who are non-Catholic. However, St. Xavier interprets one court ruling to sanction their thwarting of the teachers' vote regarding a union. St. Xavier thereby uses its Catholic identity to violate Catholic doctrine. So, NCL—among many others—was caught between adherence to doctrine and affection for the sisters and the school.

The teachers voted four years ago—maybe for collective bargaining or maybe against. The school administration blocked a count. Now the National Labor Relations Board rules that, except for teachers in its pastoral institute, St. Xavier adjuncts are not specifically "maintaining the university's religious educational environment," and thus the ballots must be counted. (*Chicago Sun Times*, 6/3/15)

In May the vote of adjuncts at Siena College (515 Loudon Rd., Loudonville, NY 12211) was counted. Also, the vote of adjuncts at

Trinity Washington University (125 Michigan Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20017) was counted. Both were for representation. (*Solidarity Notes* [7/15], 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 and *Catholic Labor Network Employer Project* [6/15/15]; www.catholiclabor.org)

Catholic doctrine cannot plunge into the particulars of a labor situation. It simply says workers vote for or against a union. NCL sympathetically explains the doctrine in *Catholic Administrators and Labor Unions* (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; this month offered as a twofer with *Go To the Worker* by Kimball Baker; both for \$17).

120+ Years

Of Catholic Social Thought

“Everything is closely interrelated.” That’s a refrain in Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Care for Our Common Home*. He masterfully relates the environment to abortion, technology, respect for the elderly, poverty, mistaken relativism, and genetics, climate, recycling, unnecessary consumption, harmony with animals and more.

Pope Francis also writes about work. Integral ecology, he says, depends on “a correct understanding of work... We were created with a vocation to work.”

The new encyclical, *Care for Our Common Home* can be obtained through National Center for the Laity (PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$12.50). NCL is also cooperating with Catholic Theological Union (5416 S. Cornell Ave., Chicago, IL 60615; www.ctu.edu) on an October 3, 2015 *Common Home* conference.

INITIATIVES’ will review several encyclical resources in a subsequent issue.

North American Spirituality

John Cort (1913-2006)

In railroad parlance a *fallen flag* is a company that disappears because of bankruptcy or merger; for example, the Soo Line or the Chicago & Northwestern. INITIATIVES laments whenever a magazine or newsletter becomes a fallen flag--be it liberal, conservative or anything else. *Religious Socialism* newsletter was a fallen flag, but now it returns as a cyber-publication: www.religioussocialism.org.

Kimball Baker, writing in *Religious Socialism* (6/3/15), profiles John Cort (1913-2006), its founding editor. Cort became a

Catholic after hearing Dorothy Day (1897-1980) talk in April 1936 at Harvard University, the school from which he graduated cum laude. What impressed him about Day? “This woman seems to be getting a lot of fun out of life and I would like to get some of that for myself,” he recalled.

Cort moved into the New York City Catholic Worker house, where in 1937 he founded Association of Catholic Trade Unionists. It eventually attracted 5,500 members with chapters and labor schools in several cities.

INITIATIVES once asked Cort what explains the lost connection between workers and Catholicism or Christianity in general. “Catholicism is about a strong sense of community,” he replied. “As U.S. workers became more prosperous, as we *made it*, we lost community. Rugged individualism has taken over. And it is not the virtues of the original ruggedness of our settlers and pioneers. It is a soft, self-indulgent individualism. The millionaires think they made it all alone. They are the new folk heroes. Even a recession does not blacken their appeal.”

Cort liked to offer “the best and shortest summary of Catholic social teaching” by quoting St. Basil (329-379): “The coat that hangs in your closet belongs to the poor.”

For more on Cort and other Catholics identified with workers, get Baker’s *Go To the Worker* (National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$17). Cort’s autobiography, *Dreadful Conversions* (Fordham Press [2003], 2546 Belmont Ave. #L, Bronx, NY 10458; \$45), makes for beautiful spiritual reading.

Rest in Peace

Deacon Roger Carlson (1943-2015)

In late May Carlson brought his car in for service and, as usual, started running the five miles back to his house. He never made it. Probably no surprise to him. Carlson was told that with a stent in an artery marathon running was not a great idea. But he had passion for it; and could be stubborn too.

“He was eccentric,” longtime friend Buck Stover says. “When he got into something, he gave it 100%. For example, he was dedicated to the labor movement.” Carlson, a crane operator, became training director for Local 49 Operating Engineers (2829 Anthony Ln. S., Minneapolis, MN 55418). Starting from

practically nothing, “he put Local 49’s apprenticeship program on the map,” says Stover.

Later Carlson served on the State Retiree Council board, but he didn’t like meetings. His attention went to *Voices of Experience*, the Council’s cable TV program.

As a deacon, Carlson led prayers at union meetings and was especially devoted to prison ministry. He regularly led services and visited with inmates at Oak Park Heights prison and Ramsey County correctional facility.

“His devotion to service was a big part of who he was, whether as a union guy or as a deacon,” says Fr. Joe Gillespie, OP of St. Albert the Great (2836 33rd Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55406).

Carlson was smart and quiet, though funny sometimes and he didn’t mince words about things he didn’t like. Most of all, he was thoughtful, generous and gentle. He and his late wife Sally, to whom he was totally devoted, raised two sons.

INITIATIVES last saw Carlson some months ago at a St. Paul café. There was some argument over hockey: Black Hawks and Wild (though Carlson was more an expert on the U of M Gophers). Carlson also made an accurate prediction about the demise of the then St. Paul archbishop. But his comments kept returning to exploited workers. At our breakfast he particularly advocated for locked out beet-processing workers and home health aides.

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NCL’s blog, *The Working Catholic*, often appears on www.patheos.com/blogs/workingcatholic; plus many posts are on www.catholiclabor.com; www.quarterpastgeorge.wordpress.com; and www.faihandlabor.blogspot.com. A few others are on www.democraticfaith.com.

NCL, an independent 501-C-3 organization, was founded in 1978, in response to the mail and publicity garnered upon publication of the Advent 1977 *Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern* (reprinted in *Church Chicago Style*, National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$1).

The NCL board is: Tom Donnelly, Chuck DiSalvo, Bill Droel, John Hazard, Frosty Pipal, Terry Mambu Rasch and Lauren Sukal.

“Those who run after nothing become nothing.” –Pope Francis at Day for Catechists (9/30/14)
He was commenting on *Isaiah 2:5*.

Here is how *The Message Bible* paraphrases Isaiah: Some people “took up with Sir Windbag and turned into windbags themselves. It never occurred to them to say *Where’s God?*” (Acta, 4848 N. Clark St., Chicago IL 60640; \$29.95)

Ed Marciniak (1917-2004), a National Center for the Laity founder, made the same point without scolding: “The cemeteries of this world are appropriate resting places for countless Christians who spent their lives waiting for cues that never came and summonses that were never delivered; who bided their time looking for others to take the initiative and to bear the burden of responsibility. While others make excuses, a Christian of personal responsibility recites an act of contrition and then shoulders a share of the burden and takes the initiative. To wait and do nothing is to be nothing.”