



THE BEACON

NEWSLETTER OF THE LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT AUTUMN 2014



Mary Hirschfeld
(Villanova University)

“Economists have lots of value to teach us.”

Do Economics and Theology Have Anything to Say to Each Other?

Mary Hirschfeld Suggests Economists and Theologians Have a Fundamentally Different Understanding of the Human Person

On hearing about the invention of the magnetic telegraph, Henry David Thoreau incisively observed that Maine and Texas could now communicate, but does Maine have anything to say to Texas?

Mary Hirschfeld, Assistant Professor of Economics & Theology at Villanova University, used this comment



of Thoreau to emphasize the communication chasm between two disciplines in which she is an expert. “We obviously can communicate but do we have anything to say to each other?” asked Hirschfeld in her keynote address at the opening of the Sixth Annual Conference on Economics and Catholic Social Thought held at the University of Chicago.

Hirschfeld made a point to indicate the commonalities: economists and theologians share a concern about social justice; about material well-being for all people and an elimination of poverty.

But she worries that there is a “fair amount of static on the line” due to their divergent anthropologies, something that Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., also outlined in his brief remarks at the start of the symposium.

Hirschfeld—who holds doctorates in both economics and theology—understands the magnitude of the communication problem because she dealt with this “crazy cacophony” in her own head as she tried to reconcile the issues raised by each discipline.

One area of misunderstanding is in the economic concept *homo economicus* (or the economic human). “*Homo economicus* is widely criticized within the tradition of Catholic Social Thought,” said Hirschfeld. Catholics are under the impression that he is selfish and ruthless, concerned only about himself. But in reality, economists mean that people pursue the goods they value (i.e. Mother Teresa, in serving the poor, was pursuing what she valued).

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“When the true God comes close to us, we are set on fire, not crushed or incinerated. God’s love is perfectly selfless.”

“Begin with the Beautiful”

Fr. Robert Barron Offers Seven Ways to Share the Gospel

Fr. Robert Barron is one of the Church’s leading evangelists. But he doesn’t want to remain in the slim ranks of those who shoulder this burden.

In his lecture titled “Pope Francis and the New Evangelization” given on May 8th at the University Club of Chicago, Fr. Barron (Rector, Mundelein Seminary/ University of Saint Mary of the Lake; founder, Word on Fire) encouraged his audience to learn about the faith so that they too can share it.

With Pope Francis as a model of how to spread “the joy of the Gospel,” Barron argued that Catholics have a duty to awaken the faith of the baptized and bring back those who have drifted. To become evangelists on fire for the Gospel, Barron suggested Catholics focus on seven areas.

1. Lead with the beautiful

Especially today, in our post-modern relativistic world, “to begin with the truth is a non-starter,”

said Barron. Worse yet is to tell people how they should behave. “Begin with the beautiful.” It is “less threatening and more winsome.” Barron gave an example from his childhood. When he was seven years old, he was taken to Tiger’s Stadium in Detroit. He was captivated by the bright green grass and the crisp white jerseys. He immediately wanted to play baseball. But if someone introduced him to the game by telling him about the “infield fly rule,” it wouldn’t have been



Fr. Robert Barron (Rector, Mundelein Seminary)

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Thomas Levergood,
Executive Director

HOW WE CAN STRENGTHEN THE IDENTITY OF CATHOLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Many Catholics are rightly concerned about the religious identity of the Church's colleges and universities. While the Lumen Christi Institute has avoided debates engaging faculty, trustees, bishops, and alumni, we are aware of what is at stake, especially in terms of recruiting Catholic scholars and scientists onto the faculty of Catholic institutions. The question of the Catholic identity of schools such as Notre Dame, Loyola and Boston College—especially in regards to faculty hiring—has very much to do with America's great secular research universities, i.e. the University of Chicago. It is therefore of concern to us.

Up until the 1950s, Catholic universities existed in a culture somewhat separate from their Protestant (and later secular) peers. The University of Notre Dame, the Catholic University of America, and Saint Louis University hired faculty either from one another, from European Catholic universities such as Louvain or the Gregorian University in Rome, or from the Catholic faculties at German research universities. Then in 1955, the leading American Catholic historian Monsignor John Tracy Ellis published a seminal essay in the journal *Thought* titled "American Catholics and the Intellectual Life." Ellis criticized American Catholic colleges for their low academic standards and a failure to cultivate a love of learning for its own sake. The essay shocked the establishment of Catholic higher education.

From this point forward, most Catholic colleges and universities sought to imitate their secular peers. Catholic priests, religious, and lay men and women enrolled in doctoral programs at the University of Chicago, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Stanford. One who readily comes to mind is the Jesuit theologian Michael J. Buckley, who completed a doctorate at the University of Chicago under the great philosopher Richard McKeon. Among lay scholars, Ralph McNerny left the seminary and then completed a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Minnesota, writing on the Protestant thinker Søren Kierkegaard. Both Buckley and McNerny, however, had had extensive Catholic intellectual formations; McNerny, for instance, studied philosophy with the renowned Thomist Charles De Koninck in Québec.

Catholic colleges and universities started hiring the best graduates they could from leading secular research universities, usually without regard to whether the scholar or scientist was a Catholic. Decades later—by the time the Catholic universities took stock of the situation—the horse was out of the barn. Neither in vital departments nor in the university as a whole are there enough Catholic faculty members to maintain a Catholic intellectual culture. Lest some think that this resulted from a conspiracy to secularize Catholic colleges, Ralph McNerny, a staunch Catholic, confessed that he himself contributed to this problem. They were told to hire that best scholars from the highest ranked research universities; that is exactly what they did. But even when they hired lay Catholic professors, these scholars less frequently had the complementary Catholic formation that Buckley and McNerny enjoyed. Thus, instead of developing a Catholic excellence that would offer light to a secular culture, Catholic universities imported secular academic standards and culture: borrowed illumination.

A few Catholic colleges and universities—most notably the University of Notre Dame—seek to increase the proportion of Catholics hired by recruiting outstanding Catholic scholars as candidates for faculty positions. My own view is that, all things being equal, a Catholic college would likely find that the best candidate for many positions would naturally be a Catholic. A younger Catholic scholar—compared to an equally qualified non-Catholic colleague—would prefer a Catholic environment where his or her teaching and research projects would be accepted within the culture. All this depends on the will of Catholic colleges to maintain their identity.

The Lumen Christi Institute addresses this situation both in its programming at the University of Chicago and in its summer seminars for doctoral students. Students attending our events—especially those who formally affiliate themselves with the Institute as graduate associates—receive formation in aspects of Catholic thought that complement their secular education. Several of our former associates or staff have received positions at Catholic colleges. I am not sure that they would be in this position without the education in Catholic thought and culture they received from the Lumen Christi Institute. The summer seminars serve the same purpose. Just today I spoke to a faculty member who said that our summer seminar on Augustine's *City of God* provided vital background for the dissertation of a student working with him. These programs are also highly cost-effective; the university bears the primary costs of doctoral students' education. Above all, both of these programs help students to actualize their potential as Catholic scholars. At various times in our newsletter, they have offered testimony to the difference the Institute has made in their life. No doubt, many of them will obtain posts at Catholic colleges where they will have an impact on hundreds and thousands of students. In a sense, we are helping prepare the next generation of faculty that will staff our Catholic universities.

Thomas Levergood

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Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.

Hirschfeld Continued from page 1.

In her talk, Hirschfeld made clear that economists in fact do an admirable job of describing or “modeling” human behavior, but they fall short in not having a broader view of the human person that includes a hunger for the infinite (God) and an ability to cultivate the virtues and human excellence. She contrasted the economic model of the human person with a sketch of the human person from the perspective of St. Thomas Aquinas (she used Aquinas because he laid out his views in a model-like fashion).



Argentine Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo

Her most memorable illustration of the difference between the disciplines resulted from her explaining their understanding of the good. Both Catholics and economists believe that humans seek the good—but there is a striking disparity in how that good is defined.

For Catholics, the good that we seek in this life is genuine, but it is still a foretaste of what is to come.

“The world is God’s love letter to

us,” she said. With this in mind, she warned against mistaking the letter for the real thing. While on earth, our desire can only be temporarily satiated. What we see is a mirror, reflecting God’s beauty and goodness. So when confronted with the material goods of this world, our task is to discern and order those goods so that they create a “harmonious arrangement that reflects the beauty of God.”

Economists don’t share this transcendent view of human flourishing. They mathematically model behavior and believe we always want more (which upholds their rational choice model) and that infinite goods reach up like a ladder. “If only we had more time and money, we could get higher up the ladder,” explained Hirschfeld of the economic perspective.

The “rational choice model” adequately describes human beings as they are. Because of our “untutored passions,” we often aren’t very virtuous; we tend to forget about the infinite and desire instead more and more goods thinking they will make us happy. But it doesn’t leave room for a more extensive model in which human happiness consists in the perfection of our human nature, in the cultivation of virtue. “Prudence is

“The world
is God’s
love letter
to us.”



Scholars at April 4th conference



Carol Graham (The Brookings Institution) gives talk on Human Happiness at Friday’s conference

the counterpart to the rational choice model in economics,” said Hirschfeld, “it guides us toward our happiness.”

Hirschfeld hopes that economists and theologians—having a better grasp of the thought process within each discipline—will start learning from one another. “Catholic theologians would do well to learn about the model of our ‘lower form of reason.’” Unfortunately, non-economists often reject policies proposed by economists because they

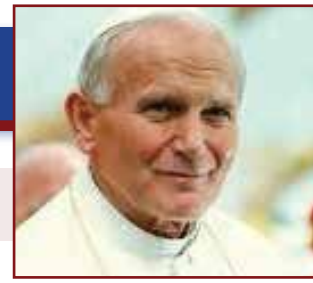
don’t appreciate the insights economists have about human behavior (i.e. human beings respond to incentives). Though the language of economics is a secular one (it doesn’t talk about virtue, our desire for God, the tension between the temporal and spiritual, our being created as communal, social beings), it nonetheless excels in describing human beings in their fallen temporal state. “Economists have lots of value to teach us,” said Hirschfeld.



Over 500 people attended the April 3rd symposium on “The Human Person, Economics, and Catholic Social Thought.” In addition to Hirschfeld, Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I. (Archbishop of Chicago), Jesus Fernandez-Villaverde (University of Pennsylvania), Rachel Kranton (Duke University), and F. Russell Hittinger (University of Tulsa) offered their perspectives.

The event was co-sponsored by The John U. Nef Committee on Social Thought, The International House Global Voices Program, The Seng Foundation Program for Market-Based Programs and Catholic Values, & The Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts at the University of Notre Dame.

Of special note was the presence of the president of the USCCB, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, and Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo—chancellor of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and the Pope’s personal representative for the new anti-slavery Global Freedom Network. They joined other bishops and economists to elaborate upon the topic in greater detail at an all-day conference held in downtown Chicago on April 4th.

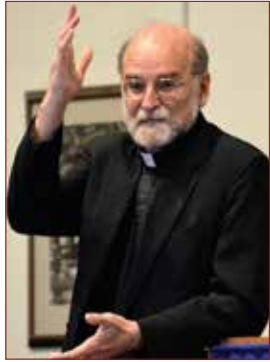


The Key to Understanding John Paul II

Fr. Raymond Gawronski: How Poland's Catholicism Shaped Saint John Paul II

John Paul II enjoyed enormous popularity with young people around the world, to the extent that a whole generation of priests called themselves “JP II Catholics.” What was it about this charismatic figure from Poland that captured the world’s attention?

Fr. Raymond Gawronski—who delivered a lecture for the Lumen Christi Institute entitled “John Paul II and the Polish Catholic Experience” on May 1, 2014 to commemorate the Polish Pontiff’s canonization—argued that an understanding of Polish culture and its vibrant Catholicism is the key to interpreting John Paul II and the impact he had on so many people.



Fr. Raymond Gawronski, S.J.

“The Polish culture is unique,” said Gawronski. In terms of appearance, Polish people tend to be “tall, fair, very gentle and refined”—“like the elves in Tolkien’s writing,” Gawronski explained. Another Polish scholar argued that “Poles are really hobbits,” and like to eat well. “They have Nordic coloring,” Gawronski said, “but not the Germanic set of jaw that you experience when you go West.” Still another friend of his told him: “there is a hint of Catholic innocence in those faces.”

Indeed, the influence of Catholicism upon the Polish nation is far-reaching. At the time of John Paul II’s visit to Poland in 1979, seventy percent of the population went to confession. But Poland’s Catholic identity reaches into its earliest history. Beginning in the tenth century, Poland would cling to Rome, not to the German Emperor. Unlike Russia, it had little influence from Byzantium. Its Roman orientation, Gawronski claimed, had a profound impact on its cultural development. While Western Europe was steeped in monasticism, the Church in Poland centered on the family. “Poles don’t become hermits, we’re much too sociable,” he joked. Its Church steeped in popular devotions, religious orders such as the Dominicans, Franciscans and Jesuits flourished there. Gawronski argued that Poland is perhaps the “most Jesuit country in the world.”

In later centuries, Poland’s faith would be severely tested.

Persecuted because of its devout Roman Catholicism, in the eighteenth century, it was the only country in Europe not to be affected by the wars and strains of the Protestant Reformation.

Though it avoided the bloody religious wars that ravaged most of Europe, it would endure a different kind of trial—loss of nationhood for 123 years.

“Poland has a long history of being oppressed,” said Gawronski. He defined oppression as a lack of access to levers of power, lack of access to the media. “Once other people tell your story, you are truly oppressed—regardless of material prosperity,” Gawronski claimed.

True oppression is powerlessness. “It’s being lied about, having one’s story not told at all, or worst yet distorted.” Because of this, Poland has much more in common with the colonized countries of the Third World, with oppressed peoples than with ruling elites.

In addition to powerlessness, the nation has had its borders change significantly in the past 200 years. Other Catholic countries—such as Ireland and Italy—have clear borders. “Ireland is not in Scotland,” Gawronski said. “But where is Poland at any given point?”

Gawronski’s family, for example, comes from the historic Lithuania—home to the great nineteenth-century Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz and the twentieth-century Nobel Prize-winning poet Czesław Miłosz. His family there

now speak Russian yet they call themselves Polish. He had a grandmother who was “Russian yet became Polish,” which really means they were “Orthodox but became Catholic.”

Poles are deeply aware of their tumultuous history, and Gawronski claimed that this awareness has a profound effect on the Polish mind. “When you think of Poland, you think of history.” The British-Polish historian Norman Davies titled his classic study of the history of Poland, *God’s Playground*, fittingly revealing that “there is a theological theme interwoven throughout that history.”

From this land of fantasy and romance and contradiction comes the dramatic figure of Karol Józef Wojtyła, who as Pope took the name of John Paul II.

“His election was the happiest day of my life,” said Gawronski, “it was better than getting tenure.”

Wojtyła was virtually unknown when he walked

“Poles don’t become hermits, we’re much too sociable.”

out onto the balcony at St. Peter’s Basilica. His name wasn’t even typically Polish. “I thought he was African,” laughed Gawronski. Though the Office of Peter is universal, he is always called the Polish Pope. “Why is he the Polish Pope and why is this so important?”

Karol Wojtyła was in fact “very Polish,” said Gawronski. He was born in the south of Poland, the region of the country that had been partitioned by the Austrians. Being partitioned by Russia, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire left a strong imprint on Poland. It was crystal clear where in Poland one was by viewing the architecture, but also in observing how people behaved. There was a different character in each place. The South remained profoundly Catholic. In contrast to the vodka and mazurkas of Warsaw, it was the region of beer and polkas and hikes through the mountains.

Because of the Partitions and the experience of exile and betrayal, Poland was not a light-hearted spiritual culture. It saw itself as the Christ of the nations, and understood its sorrow and suffering in light of the sufferings of Jesus himself.

John Paul II himself was very fatherly. People around the world responded to that, said Gawronski. When he visited the Philippines, seven million people came to see him. Gawronski examined the roots of John Paul II’s ability to connect with the oppressed and marginalized: “Is that Polish or profoundly Christian? Is Christianity really a religion for ‘slaves?’” Gawronski then stressed that the life of a Christian is most profoundly about service—not about power or influence or the esteem of the world.

Poles indeed had intimate knowledge of what it meant to be voiceless, to vanish suddenly from having a place among the nations. It comes as no surprise that patriotism—a deep love of country—was a strong feature of Poles in John Paul II’s generation. Gawronski described it as a “thick tangle of Polish religion and nationalism.” “He was a flower of that first generation that returned to statehood. All were Catholics, had opłatek (Polish Christmas wafer), but their real religion was Poland.”

Gawronski will never forget when in 1984 he stayed at a modern Communist hotel in Gdynia and visited a church next door where written in stone were the words of Christ from the diary of the young Faustyna Kowalska (who would later be canonized by JP II): “I have particularly fallen in love with Poland. If she will remain faithful...from her will come a spark that will prepare the world for my Second Coming.”

In Poland, Faustyna’s message of mercy helped people get through the Second World War. “Notice that the message was mercy not primarily justice,” Gawronski underscored. “And that’s very important coming from a country like Poland.”

“Maybe JP II was that spark,” he said. “There’s a Polish mystique around that.”

Begin with the Beautiful Continued from page 1.

as appealing. Begin with Chartres Cathedral, the stained glass at Sainte-Chapelle, the work of Mother Teresa's sisters, the music of Mozart, urged Barron. Draw people into the good and the true through that door. The debates in the Church after the Second Vatican Council have been similar to the "infield fly rule." That's not how we're going to lure in the next generation. We have to start with beauty, as Pope Francis has said, "begin with the merciful face of Christ."

2. Don't dumb down the message

Among Barron's greatest frustrations is when parishioners approach him after Mass complaining that they didn't understand his homily. "Father, you're speaking over our heads." Barron pushes back against this kind of 'the faith is too complicated' mentality. Catholics today are doctors and lawyers, bankers and investors. They read high-level medical journals and complex case histories and take over businesses. "Why do you expect your religion to be spoon-fed?" Barron probed.

Urging his audience to take pride in coming from "the oldest intellectual tradition in the West," he told them to learn about great thinkers such as Origen, Jerome, Augustine, Bonaventure, and John Henry Newman. Catholics should know that Vatican II was produced "by the cream of the intellectual crop at the time." "Read those documents," prodded Barron, "you will be struck by their intellectual richness."

Indeed, Catholics need to stubbornly think about their faith, need to take it as seriously as any other aspect of their life. He insisted that we take example from those who elevate, who educate, who inspire: "I first read Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* when I was fourteen-years-old. Though I understood about ten percent of it, I was taught that there was such a thing, that there was rhetoric at that level." He encouraged a similar approach to our passing down the faith: "Why aren't we teaching fourteen-year-olds Dante and Augustine?"

3. Preach with ardor

John Paul II called for a new ardor, a new fire in preaching the faith. "Aristotle said long ago that finally people only really listen to an excited speaker," Barron said, pointing to the TV advertisements where people muster "enormous enthusiasm" for second-rate products. He drew a contrast to his own experience at Mundelein where some of his students preach their sermons like they just rolled out of bed.

Where does the fire come from? The early Church was marked by a certain kind of fiery missionary ardor. Barron argues it comes from clarity about the Resurrection. Christianity isn't about some "blandly abstract reflections" proposed by another spiritual guru. Neither is it about arguments, about people bickering about authority and sexuality ("that's not going to be intellectually compelling," he said). It's about an experience so overwhelming that people want to "grab the whole world by the lapels and tell them, 'Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!'"

"We're here to let the light out. Christ is the *Lumen Gentium*: The Light of the People." We understood Vatican II all wrong. "It wasn't primarily to modernize the Church...it was to Christify the world," he said.

"Evangelization is about sharing that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead."

4. Tell the great story

Catholics should know their Old Testament. After all, "evangelization is that the great story of Israel has come to fulfillment," Barron said. The story of Jesus Christ cannot be understood without placing him within the history of Israel. We have a thousand spiritual teachers, but Christ is the "New David, the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham, the

New Moses, New Adam." Barron argued that evangelization takes on a sparkle and a snap when you realize that the Church is the new Israel. Sadly, for many Catholics today, Israel has little relevance. "If you don't get Israel, you don't get him." Is the Old Testament with all its genealogies and strange references to people and places we often cannot pronounce too daunting to tackle? Barron recounted that he once met an eight-year-old child who had memorized every subplot and character in the Stars Wars saga. Our children are capable of learning the timeless stories of Scripture.

5. Stress the Augustinian Anthropology

As Augustine famously stated: "Our heart is restless until it rests in You." We all have been wired for God. There is nothing in this world that satisfies. "Secularism is soul destroying," Barron said. It tells us that "we can find satisfaction in the goods of the world; it denies this hunger that can't be met by anything in this world." When we fall for the lie of secularism, "we hook the desire for God onto wealth, pleasure, power, and honor. We spend our lives hopping around those altars." The destruction of our souls is a life and death matter. We need to stand up against this idolatry and "speak the language of the true God," tell the world that only God can satisfy our deepest desires.



Enjoying Barron's talk on "Pope Francis and the New Evangelization"

6. God Does Not Need Us

God's love is perfect. St. Irenaeus—the 2nd century bishop of Lyon in today's France—understood God to have loved the world into being. He can only relate in a loving way to the world. Unlike the destruction wrought by the ancient gods, our God is not a rival, nor does he want something out of us. Barron explained with the story of Moses who sees a bush that is on fire but not consumed. "When the true God comes close to us, we are set on fire, not crushed or incinerated. God's love is perfectly selfless," said Barron. He wants us to be "fully alive." It is unfortunate that atheists are unaware of this deeply liberating view of God.

7. Use the new media

Before using new media, Catholic evangelists should have knowledge of the old media, namely books. "Stay with the old media so you have something to say," he said. But once you have an intellectual foundation, figure out how to use these new tools. Barron shared several stories of how young people came across his website (and later came into the Church) through a random Google search. One young lady googled Charlie Sheen which brought her to Martin Sheen and then Fulton Sheen and then Barron's website and then eventually into the Church. Kids become atheists today because they come across a great deal of secular content online, but usually very little Christian content.

Barron concluded his talk with John Paul II's observation that "the new evangelization is really the old evangelization." Throughout history, the Church preaches Christ. However, for us to evangelize in today's world, our approach "has to be new in expression and method." In other words, we are telling the same truths, but in different ways.



Students Continue to Benefit from Graduate Summer Seminars

This past summer, the Lumen Christi Institute hosted three successful summer seminars in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition for graduate students: “The Thought of John Henry Newman” in Oxford, “St. Thomas Aquinas on Free Choice” in Rome; and “Truth and Authority in Augustine’s *City of God*” in Berkeley, CA. The intensive seminars covered what amounts to a semester’s worth of material in five days and are designed to influence the quality of future Catholic faculty available to our colleges and universities.



Torn Between Two Cities

Students Examine Questions of Truth and Authority in Augustine’s *City of God* at Berkeley

It often seems that our allegiances are confused, our loves are divided; we are torn between the earthly and heavenly cities.

In exploring the meaning of this, Augustine’s *City of God* is sprawling. It is a defense of a Church accused of bringing upon the downfall of Rome; it gives rousing encouragement to Christians who need to keep their sights, not on Rome, but on the heavenly Jerusalem and their love of God. “The heavenly city, or rather the part of it which sojourns on earth and lives by faith, makes use of this peace only because it must, until this mortal condition which necessitates it shall pass away,” writes Augustine.



James J. O’Donnell calls it “the longest work presenting a sustained argument, unified around a coherent single theme, to survive from Greco-Roman antiquity.”

Ernest Fortin remarks, “The sheer bulk of the *City of God* and the subtlety of its analyses

are such as to render futile any attempt to condense the whole of its teaching into a few paragraphs.”

Indeed, it is a formidable challenge to interpret Augustine’s great text.

But this summer, seventeen doctoral students from across the United States—pursuing advanced degrees at academic institutions like the University of Notre Dame, Columbia University, Boston College, Duke University, and the Catholic University of America—tackled Augustine’s lengthy reflections on what it means to live in this world while having our hearts set on the next.

During the seminar on “Truth and Authority in Augustine’s *City of God*” held at Berkeley from July 27th to August 1st, students explored whether

“*City of God* is one of the central texts of Western Christianity, but one to which, even after 4 years of theological education, I had had little exposure. This class, and a more thorough exposure to the text, changed some of my theological perspectives and will definitely impact how I research and teach in the future.”

- Elisabeth Kincaid, University of Notre Dame



it is possible to reconcile truth and authority across the competing domains of polity, religion, and philosophical wisdom. The seminar was led by F. Russell Hittinger, William K. Warren Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Tulsa and member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

Remarkably some students had little or no exposure to the *City of God* prior to this seminar.

“*City of God* is one of the central texts of Western Christianity, but one to which, even after 4 years of theological education, I had had little exposure. This class and a more thorough exposure to the text changed some of my theological perspectives and will definitely impact how I research and teach in the future,” says Elisabeth Kincaid, a PhD student in Moral Theology at the University of Notre Dame.

Kincaid was overjoyed with what she learned, but also with having the opportunity to connect with other young scholars who challenged her way of thinking.

“The organization, the wonderful teaching by Dr. Hittinger, and the high quality of presentations and class discussions by my fellow students made the entire week a wonderful intellectual experience. The discussions continued outside the classroom to lunches, walks, and dinners. The diverse fields of study of the participating students made these continued discussions particularly rewarding,” remarks Kincaid.

Lumen Christi hopes that the seminar participants will be inspired by their experience at Berkeley to teach Augustine’s monumental work in their courses and incorporate its insights into their intellectual vision and research, and that they will invariably continue beyond this summer to consider how to live charitably in the present world while placing their hope in the world to come.

Baudelaire: Obsessed with Original Sin

Françoise Meltzer Gives Lecture on the Nineteenth-Century Poet's Preoccupation with Evil

Many people find it hard to come to terms with the dark side of human nature. Some maintain a positive outlook despite facts to the contrary. Still others outright deny reality—sheltering themselves from life's seamy side by looking at the world through “rose-colored glasses.”

Not so with the nineteenth-century Symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire. A struggling Catholic, Baudelaire was a firm believer in the doctrine of original sin. His conviction, or rather “obsession,” came—not from catechesis or spiritual instruction—but from his exposure to life's darkest and most disturbing aspects.



Françoise Meltzer (University of Chicago)

Living on the brink of modernity in a bustling Paris where people were indifferent, were harried, were consumed with the temptations of a materialism promised by the Industrial Age, Baudelaire's world was a sinister, unfriendly place.

There is an element of “a mythical prehistory in the poet,” writes Françoise Meltzer, professor and chair of comparative

literature with an appointment in the Divinity School, in her book *Seeing Double: Baudelaire's Modernity*. He is obsessed with original sin, she contends. “Guilt inspires his narratives even as redemption remains out of reach.”

A poetic spirit dwelling in what he deemed an irredeemable world, Baudelaire was a gifted but troubled man.

In her lecture “Baudelaire & Maistre: The Weight of Original Sin” given at the University of Chicago on May 22nd, Meltzer traced Baudelaire's obsession with sin from his early embracing of Augustinian concepts (i.e. *The Confessions*, an infant has an inclination to evil from the very first day of its birth) to his later fascination with the views of Count Joseph de Maistre, a fiercely Catholic and ultra-royalist aristocrat.

“It is Baudelaire's bleak view of the world that draws him to Maistre—for the latter has a dark vision that Augustine did not share, but the poet did. The concept of evil in Baudelaire frequently ends up sublating his radical binary structures, such that Satan and God are often conflated.”

Baudelaire's world was indeed a dark one.

As a dandy and flâneur (or city wanderer), Paris provided him with unending examples of human depravity. He saw the temptations of city life, of how it could wreck and destroy a man's soul. “Baudelaire's depiction of debauchery is the affirmation of his deepest belief,” explained Meltzer. For the poet was convinced “that man can never escape his sinful heritage.”

Consequently, he wrote poems about boys, little savages “panting and bloody,” fighting over a loaf of bread. His poetic vision included vampires, carcasses, poison, fountains of blood, and dancing serpents.

The first poem of *Les Fleurs du mal* is about the devil who holds the strings that move us. In Baudelaire's world, we are trapped by the lure and reality of sin, no matter how desperately we desire to escape it.

Sin was an external and internal reality. Within his own soul, he felt the twisting, burning conflict. He famously wrote in his journal: “There are in every man two postulations—one toward God and one toward Satan.” But in this fleshly dialectic between good and evil, sin always wins. Humanity is doomed. Every man is prone to defeat, to being duped by the devil.

One of the reasons for our unavoidable tendency to falter, Baudelaire believed, is that sin gives us pleasure. It is a sentiment echoed by the writer Joseph Conrad who called sin “the source of a proud and unholy joy.”

His thinking coincided with Freud, whose insistence on the primal scene—the crime of patricide as the basis for civilization—inspired his understanding of the unconscious.

There can be no true goodness, no authentic happiness.

“Thus Rousseau, Baudelaire frequently noted, was an idiot because he believed in the natural goodness of man—he was naturally stoned (without hashish) by his own simple-minded morality,” said Meltzer.

Poor Rousseau was too naïve to know that children were but “immature Satans.” They were “unripe grain, but they will be Satan's harvest in the end.”



“Guilt inspires his narratives even as redemption remains out of reach.”

Even when man appears most innocent, he is always already sinful. Nature is nothing other than self-interest. Every happy moment is compromised by an unhappy one. Innocence is never genuine.

Despite all this, Baudelaire thirsted with all his being for redemption. He would write a poem titled *Reversibility* about an “angel” he loved, but only from the distance. She could only be a mirage—a phantasm on the horizons of his troubled soul. She couldn't exist. His philosophy didn't allow for it. Nonetheless from the despair of the darkened abyss, he cried out: “But of you, angel, I beg only prayers, Angel full of happiness, of joy and of light!”

“Here, the angel is the woman whom the narrator loves, and the intercession he seeks from her is freedom from the pain of vices too powerful to allow for happiness,” said Meltzer.

Indeed, for Baudelaire, the present world appeared like an underworld, and offered him the ability to record reality as he saw it in the anguished verse of his *Les Fleurs du mal*, but gave him no joy, no hope, no comfort.

Dominic Chiu

THIRD-YEAR ECONOMICS AND PHILOSOPHY UNDERGRADUATE

What is your area of study and what is the focus of your current research?

I am a Third-Year Economics and Philosophy undergraduate from Hong Kong, China. I am interested in behavioral economics, specifically on the analyses of decision-making. In philosophy, I focus on reading Aristotelian ethics and dabbling in action theory. I am also interested in comparing Catholic ethics and metaphysics with that of Chinese philosophy and religions.

How did you first hear about Lumen Christi? Which event did you first attend, and why?

When I first arrived at the University of Chicago, I soon heard about the Lumen Christi Institute through Calvert House, the Catholic student center at the University. I attended my first Lumen Christi event on the poetry and religious identity of Shakespeare, a lecture by John Finnis. I was drawn to the event primarily because of my interest in the lecturer, who is an internationally well-known expert in Thomism and natural law.

How has your participation in Institute lectures, conferences, and seminars contributed to your growth as a scholar?

One of the best ways Lumen Christi events have contributed to my scholarship is that they provide a view of all professional subjects from a perspective both internal and external to the subjects themselves. Internal, because the lecturers are themselves professionals in the fields of economics, theology, literature, and the natural sciences; external, because unlike the college which professes topics

from a technically-minded view, Lumen Christi lectures reconcile subjects from across the academic spectrum. More importantly, it infuses the spirit of Catholic scholarship in its discussions and lectures, always providing viewpoints of the faith from the contributions of its student attendants and its guest speakers.

Is there a particular event (or encounter with a scholar) that has directly impacted the development of your academic work?

The annual programs on Economics and Catholic Social Thought is a great example of the reconciliation of subjects I have mentioned. Never too technical in its content, the programs' inclusion of Catholic and non-Catholic economists on the panels allows for a genuine sharing of ideas among different beliefs in a science otherwise left to only the technocrats. At a university which takes pride in its economics' program, Lumen Christi's economics conference provides a crucial discussion on the much needed presence and development of a moral economy.

What do you plan to do after you have completed your degree from the University of Chicago?

I preliminarily plan to either enter investment banking as an analyst or work in corporate finance at an insurance company after graduation. I am also considering the continuation of my academic pursuits at think tanks or working in the civil service of the Hong Kong Government.

Please comment on the role you think the Institute plays on the University of Chicago campus.

The Institute is a crucial provider of Catholic intellectual resources at a secular campus like the University of Chicago. Its capability to invite prominent intellectuals and religious figures from across traditions to its events is remarkable, and it continues to draw the attention and respect of religious and non-religious academics alike. The University of Chicago needs Lumen Christi to continue to fuel the needs of Catholic students who are searching for an enriching, faith-based student life in their everyday work; it also answers the many concerns non-Catholic students might have on the Church and its relationship with the many facets of modern life in and outside of campus.

“The Institute is a crucial provider of Catholic intellectual resources at a secular campus like the University of Chicago. Its capability to invite prominent intellectuals and religious figures from across traditions to its events is remarkable, and it continues to draw the attention and respect of religious and non-religious academics alike.”

Dominic Chiu



Filmmaker Abbie Reese

THE ATTRACTION OF ASCETICISM

U of C Grad Creates Documentary Film That Gives a Unique View of the Life of Cloistered Monastic Nuns

Asceticism—its otherworldliness, its detachment, its stark and beautiful simplicity—has captured the imagination of many sensitive, artistic temperaments. From the 19th-century novelist Gustave Flaubert who attempted to write about the life of the hermit Anthony of the Desert (he failed badly) to the contemporary film director Philip Gröning whose *Into Great Silence* gave its viewers an intimate portrayal of the spiritual life of Carthusian monks, artists have used their abilities to open a window to a life otherwise hidden from view, lived only for God.

Cloistered monastic nuns have, until now, remained hidden. For their choice of vocation precludes them from (unlike active orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits) bearing witness in the world.

It took Abbie Reese—a recent University of Chicago MFA graduate—entering into the stillness so that those in the world could have a unique view of life within a cloister. In fact, prior to Reese's work, there had never before been an oral history project and documentary film that deals with the lives of cloistered monastic nuns that observe monastic silence and take vows of enclosure.

For Reese, the cloister was a stark contrast to values in popular culture. Having worked as a journalist, she was used to people who wanted the spotlight, who couldn't wait to have their fifteen minutes of fame.

She was further struck by women of her own generation who chose to live such counter-cultural lives: "What compels a woman—in this era of overexposure—at a time with the technological means to reach a global audience—to make a drastic, lifelong intercultural decision for her life, in favor of obscurity?" Reese asked in the introduction to her book, *Dedicated to God: An Oral History of Cloistered Nuns*.

Reese was drawn to the nuns' desire for obscurity, and has been changed in the process of working with them.

"Cloistered monastic nuns have, until now, remained hidden."

Throughout her brief career, she has also taken seriously the need for an artist to be invisible so that the other can come more clearly into focus. Whether she is working on photography projects, conducting oral history interviews, or creating documentary films, she has contended with the question of mediation—most recently handing over the video cameras to the nuns so that they can document their world from their perspective. Even though Reese was not present, the relationships she developed over the past nine years are embedded in the video footage.

Prior to her project on cloistered life, Reese traveled all over the globe (she has been to approximately forty countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa). She sought to bring to the surface stories that were neglected but needed attention. She devoted her time to journalistic projects that dealt with women's issues, artistic work like *Faces of West Africa* (a

traveling photographic exhibition), and the oral history and photographic exhibition *Untold Stories: Freeport's African-American History*, installed across from where Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas famously debated.

While at the University of Chicago, she was the Artist's Salon Assistant at the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality. Her work contends with those who have been marginalized, whose voices would not otherwise be heard.

Her background as a journalist, oral historian, and advocate of women's rights would lead her—surprisingly—to a cloister of Poor Clare nuns right in her home state of Illinois.

Reese isn't Catholic. Raised Evangelical by converts (her mother had been a-religious and her father was raised Jewish), it was the contemporary culture, ironically, that first introduced her to the image of a Catholic nun. She remembers seeing nuns in *I Love Lucy* and *The Flying Nun*, as well as borrowing the film *A Nun's Story* from her older sister who is a film buff.



Much later, in her college years now, she came across an article about young women in Italy who were becoming nuns. They wanted to wear traditional habits and some of them were the daughters of fashion designers. This juxtaposition of belonging to a cultural tradition and choosing something so counter-cultural made a significant impression on her.

In 2005, upon returning from a year living and volunteering on a hospital ship in West Africa, Abbie discovered a counter-cultural community of nuns

less than an hour from where she grew up (the 800-year-old rule of the Poor Clares Colettine nuns in Rockford, Illinois, who abide by the strict monastic discipline of silence and anonymity and rarely set foot outside the 25,000-square foot monastery and the 14-acres of their gated property).

She was intrigued that these women had chosen to be veiled, hidden from society—following a vocation for which there has been a steady erosion of interest (between 1970 to 2010, the number of religious sisters worldwide fell almost 30 percent). With her experience in oral history, she could document their lives, prevent them from being erased, not only from the landscape, but from memory. To the surprise of her colleagues and professors, she chose these cloistered nuns as the subject of her research at the University of Chicago.

The result was the book, *Dedicated to God: An Oral History of Cloistered Nuns*, in 2014—which attracted the attention of Casey N. Cep at *The New Yorker*. The review was glowing: "That is...one of monasticism's surprises: where the world expects sorrow, the cloistered feel joy. Reese's attentiveness and patience allows that joy to reveal itself. She also shows clearly that these women are not disingenuous: they know all they have left outside the cloister walls, and they acknowledge how hard it is to

Continued on page 10.

The Attraction of Asceticism

Continued from page 9.

live together, not only in quotidian ways by sharing space and limited resources but in spiritual ways, praying for a peace that none of them may live to see.”

Reese is now engaged in a different artistic dimension of exploring cloistered life. As director/producer of the collaborative documentary film in-progress, *Chosen (Custody of the Eyes)*, she is probing the mysteries of a religious vocation, returning to the original question: how does it happen that a young woman chooses (or chooses not) to join an order? What are the ups and downs in the day-to-day life as a young woman transitions into cloistered contemplative life and assimilates into the religious community? Fascinatingly, in exploring such questions, Reese has found her own project imitating popular culture. By making a documentary film that echoes aspects of reality television, she is able to navigate the complexities of artistic involvement (how much does her own hand steer the direction of the film?) and abide by the rules of the order (only a community member can enter the cloister).

The concept for the film is deceptively simple. Reese met “Heather” in 2005. She interviewed her for six years as she deliberated whether she was called to enter a cloistered order. Since Heather grew up watching reality television—when Reese gave her a camera—the style of a self-revealing video diary came naturally to her. She took the camera into the cloister to document the simple joys, little trials, and great sacrifices that make up her experience there. The film, in a nutshell, follows “Heather”—the newest member of the community—as she evolves into her new identity as “Sister Amata” (both names are pseudonyms so as to reflect the Poor Clare pursuit of anonymity).

“I found her idea of passing the camera to one of the nuns (from a point of view of Visual Anthropology) especially intriguing,” remarks Dr. Luc Schaedler, a documentary filmmaker who resides in Switzerland, of Reese’s film. “There seems to be a dialogue, which not only works on the level of speech (conversations), but also on the visual level (camera). The potential for the field of Visual Anthropology that I find in this film project lies exactly in this double dialogue, which makes the film an ongoing experiment of collaboration and not just an insightful film about the nuns.”

As an artistic photographer and filmmaker, entering into the cloistered environment (as both an outsider to the faith and an outsider to the order) has been an incredibly profound experience.

Initially for Reese, approaching cloistered life was an intellectual pursuit. In time, the relationships she developed with the cloistered nuns kept her engaged.

With her desire to bring people’s stories to the surface, she wanted to truly understand why a modern young woman would leave everything she has—sometimes at the great cost of going against the wishes of her family—to live an austere life closed-off from the world.

Furthermore, to capture their experience, she was bringing modern devices (the camera, for still photography and the moving image, and microphone) into a space that throughout the history of the Church had been practically impenetrable. Humbled, she reflected upon her ability to mediate their experience. She found mediation to be all around her. “A nun is a mediator between heaven and earth,” she explains. “So I was looking into how the camera, film, and the form of my project mirrored the concept of a nun’s life.”



Following “Heather” as she discerns her vocation



As she learned more about them, she became more and more intrigued by women who called this their vocation, their calling. What was that mysterious inner prompting that would inspire one to forge a path that is at odds with everything that is deemed important?

From the perspective of a non-Catholic who was earnest to learn the symbolism of religious life (the habit, the metal grille) and the paradoxes of sacrifice that bring about freedom and inner peace, she has been mesmerized by the quiet witness of young women of the twenty-first century who have given everything they have in the world because they believe with all their heart in what they cannot see and cannot touch.

Over the time she has known them, she has been impressed by their strength, by their discipline, by their self-sufficiency and independence. Her heart has been touched by their warmth and openness to her; by their following the treatise of their order that urges them to yearn for “fulfillment in God, in an uninterrupted nostalgia of the heart;” by their giving her special access to a hidden world where they live as “intermediaries between humanity and the invisible realm”—daring to become “saints on earth” and “mothers of souls.”

Reese’s project has utterly transformed her. Walking the streets of Chicago after immersing herself in a cloistered monastery for eight years has been jarring, occasionally uncomfortable. It has caused her to question the pace of the world beyond the enclosure. “I don’t want to feel the urgency of living in this world.” For a certain period of time, she deactivated her Facebook account and changed to a basic flip phone to “pare things down a bit.” She is looking to take meditation classes.

Additionally, shortly after she first started working with the nuns, she purchased a house built in 1888 in Northwest, Illinois, that she has turned into a place of retreat. “The nuns described the monastery as a sacred space,” she says—acknowledging she wants to imitate that sensorial environment, that sense of stillness that opens one to the spiritual realm.

She has tried to assimilate their practices into her own vocation, while recognizing the unavoidable tension that exists when one is surrounded by distractions. “I have struggled to define what place I can keep in this world,” she admits.

Whatever one’s vocation, she has learned that there are trials, struggles when you give your life to something (Reese, for example, is trying to overcome the financial strain of her project). She gathers strength from the quiet simple women who work and pray seven times a day for the souls of those they will never meet. The nuns—who have so cheerfully abandoned the world—have taught her to live more deeply, more gratefully in it.



Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I. (Archbishop of Chicago) and Mary Hirschfeld (Villanova University) at symposium on *“The Human Person, Economics, & Catholic Social Thought”*

April 3, 2014

SPRING QUARTER 2014

Left to right: University of Chicago Professors John D. Kelly, Ben Laurence, Hans Joas, William Schweiker, & Michael Geyer at symposium on *“The Sacredness of the Person: A New Genealogy of Human Rights”*



Robert Pippin (University of Chicago) asks a question after the “Symposium on *The Sacredness of the Person*”

May 14, 2014



Schola Antiqua rehearses at Bond Chapel prior to their concert on *“A Mother’s Mother: Music for St. Anne”*

May 9, 2014



June 26, 2014

The Hon. Thomas More Donnelly introduces panelists at *“A Crisis of Community: Catholic School Closures and Urban Neighborhoods”*

April 23, 2014

Lawrence Cunningham (University of Notre Dame) gives talk on *“The Holiness of John XXIII”* to commemorate his canonization this past spring



Upcoming Events

October



15 Wednesday, 7:00pm
“Interpreting Pope Francis: Evangelization & The Family”
Anna Moreland, Villanova University

16 Thursday, 11:30am – 1:30pm
A Guide to the Thought of Pope Francis
Anna Moreland, Villanova University

23 Thursday, 7:00pm
Monastic Silence and a Visual Dialogue
Abbie Reese, Author of *Dedicated to God: An Oral History of Cloistered Nuns*



29 Wednesday, 4:30pm
The Modern Scientist as a Palimpsest of Three Fausts
Stephen Meredith, Villanova University

November

5 Wednesday, 4:30pm
The Necessity of Goodness
Rémi Bague, Sorbonne/University of Munich

6 Thursday, 4:30pm
Symposium on Christianity, Philosophy, and the Classical Tradition
Rémi Bague, Sorbonne/University of Munich
Jean-Luc Marion, University of Chicago
Others TBA



13 Thursday, 4:30pm
The Myth of Romance: de Rougemont’s *Love in the Western World*
Mark Shiffman, Villanova University



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Graduate students in Rome for summer seminar on “St. Thomas Aquinas on Free Choice” (June 23-27)