



THE BEACON

NEWSLETTER OF THE LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT

AUTUMN 2021

REQUIESCAT IN PACE, THOMAS LEVERGOOD (1962-2021)

Thomas Levergood, the executive director and founder of the Lumen Christi Institute, passed away on August 6 after a brief battle with cancer. The following tribute is adapted from remarks given at Thomas' wake by friend and theologian Bernard McGinn.

Like everyone else, I was not only deeply saddened, but truly shocked by the suddenness of Thomas' death. Some few short weeks before, we had been talking about his plans for the upcoming year at Lumen Christi; then word reached us that he had had a serious operation and was recuperating. I was able to see him several times in the weeks that followed, and my wife, Pat, and I also had a visit when he was in rehabilitation. The last time I saw him was at the University of Chicago Medical Center the Sunday before his passing. It seems to me almost incomprehensible that I will no longer run into him on the streets near Gavin House, puffing on his pipe and strolling along with his dog, the faithful Bossuet, by his side.

Thomas took at least one course with me during his time as a student at the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought between 1991 and 1996. Where I really got to know him, however, was through the foundation and development of the Lumen Christi Institute beginning in about 1996 or 1997. Thomas liked to blame me for the existence of Lumen Christi, but that is at best only half right. It is true that in the mid-1990s, the then-chaplain of Calvert House, Fr. Willard Jabusch, got a bee in his bonnet about creating a Catholic Studies program at the University of Chicago. I did my best to discourage

the idea. I argued that the University of Chicago was not a good venue for such an initiative. However, I was fully supportive of the idea that more needed to be done on campus to highlight and disseminate the riches of the Catholic intellectual and spiritual heritage, so I suggested some kind of center or institute might be established that would bring noted Catholic scholars to the university for lectures, programs, and courses. I believe similar views were expressed by Fr. David Tracy, Jean-Luc Marion, and other faculty whom Fr. Jabusch consulted.

Paul J. Griffiths, who was at that time on the Divinity School faculty, also agreed, and he took on much of the delicate role of helping create and advise the nascent Lumen Christi Institute, an intellectual entity that was at the university, but not of the university, in the sense that it was fully independent, although designed to collaborate with the university programs when this was possible. I describe this task as a delicate one, which it was, because there were some at the university who were suspicious of Lumen Christi and its intentions.

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LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE

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Michael Le Chevallier

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Thomas Levergood †

Dear friends of the institute,

This year, we have confronted the two greatest challenges ever to face our organization: the need to re-establish ourselves following the pandemic and the loss of Thomas Levergood, the man who helped found and build the Lumen Christi Institute over the past 25 years.

Despite the significant success of programming during the pandemic — and the considerable growth of our online offerings — this is a building year for Lumen Christi as we re-engage students who, due to COVID-19, only participated in their campus community virtually. The return of in-person classes and the arrival of students to campus present an opportunity to engage new generations with the Catholic intellectual tradition as personal schedules and campus culture form anew.

Accordingly, we have resumed our classic offerings of thought-provoking lectures and non-credit courses to supplement the studies of students. One master's student recently told me that she found our weekly course on "The Living Jesus at the Intersection of History and Faith" to be like "water" compared with the dry regimen of study she engaged in for her courses.

But we also return to campus without Thomas, who was not only our director and mentor, but a friend who, despite his characteristic gruffness, cared for each member of his team.

When Thomas was first diagnosed with cancer in May 2021, we all thought he had more time: more time to see the friends kept away during COVID, more time to transmit the wisdom of building up Lumen Christi for 25 years, more time on this earth. Seeing the passage of time, Thomas also expressed dismay early on in his treatment. He still had so much to do, he exclaimed. For anyone who knew Thomas, the sentiment was not surprising. He was always brimming with new ideas.

Yet, Thomas was one of those people who bore the unique quality of thinking institutionally. He didn't want one event after another: he wanted it all to hang together with a plan for its sustainability, both financially and organizationally. His dedication to Lumen Christi was apparent in the last months of his life. Even while in treatment, he was concerned about the life and future of the institute.

More time is what institutions buy us. We now carry the torch of the important mission embedded in the institute: to make the Catholic intellectual tradition a vital part of the university and our wider society. While we continue to mourn Thomas' absence, by advancing the Lumen Christi Institute's mission, increasing its impact, and securing its future, we advance Thomas' legacy.



Michael Le Chevallier
Acting Executive Director



OCT. 8: “The Life and Legacy of Fr. Paul Mankowski, S.J.” with Fr. Kevin Flannery, S.J. (Pontifical Gregorian University) and Gary Anderson (University of Notre Dame)

FALL 2021

23
events

515
in-person
attendees

1,212
online
attendees

The Lumen Christi Institute returned to in-person events at the University of Chicago and downtown in the fall of 2021. In addition to resuming our engagement with students at the university, we maintained our virtual audience by offering a virtual component for most of our in-person events.



NOV. 17: “Michelangelo’s Women: Feminine Genius in the Frescoes of the Sistine Chapel” with Elizabeth Lev (Duquesne University)



OCT. 14: Conversation on “The Rage of Innocence: How America Criminalizes Black Youth” with James Forman (Yale) and Kristin Henning (Georgetown)



OCT. 21: “The Salvific Power of the Inner Life of Christ: the Witness of the Ecumenical Councils” with Fr. Khaled Anatolios (University of Notre Dame)



OCT. 7: “Conscience and Human Rights in Aquinas and Some Predecessors” with Fr. Kevin Flannery, S.J. (Pontifical Gregorian University)



Meet the Acting Executive Director

Longtime Lumen Christi staff member Michael Thomas Le Chevallier was elected acting executive director by Lumen Christi's board of directors in May, having served as associate director for the past two years.

Le Chevallier was born and raised in Oregon, where he earned a B.A. in religious studies and French from Willamette University in Salem. Upon graduation, he spent a year on a Watson Fellowship as an independent researcher of inculturation theology in nine different African countries, followed by a year teaching high school in Nantes, France.

Upon his return to the United States in 2008, he enrolled in the University of Chicago's M.Div. program and first encountered the Lumen Christi Institute through a non-credit course offered on campus to graduate students. In 2011, he began doctoral studies in theological ethics at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

He began working for the Lumen Christi Institute in 2012, coordinating programming in Catholic social thought, including annual conferences in economics and Catholic social thought, lectures, symposia and summer seminars. He was named assistant director in 2017. In this role, he co-led Lumen Christi's project "Science and Religion: The Dialogue of Cultures," funded by the John Templeton Foundation.

He earned his Ph.D. in 2019, having defended his dissertation titled, "The Stain of Association and the Burden of Membership: Institutional Ethics in Paul Ricoeur and Catholic Social Thought."

That same year, Le Chevallier was promoted to associate director, collaborating with executive director Thomas Levergood to develop and implement programs on topics across the Catholic intellectual tradition and spearheading programs in Hispanic theology,

Black Catholicism, and science and religion.

In this role, he also assisted in overseeing operations, communications, marketing, office management, and the successful execution of programs and events. He has initiated, developed and nurtured strategic relationships with campus departments and centers, regional partners, national institutions and peer institutes across the country. In 2020, he helped lead Lumen Christi's successful pivot to online programming.

Le Chevallier, a recipient of the University of Chicago Divinity School Prize for Excellence in Teaching, is also an esteemed instructor of theology. He has taught courses in the humanities, Catholic social thought, Christian ethics and business ethics at the University of Chicago, DePaul University and Loyola University of Chicago.

His publishing credits include co-editor of "Jean Bethke Elshtain: Politics, Ethics, and Society" (Notre Dame, 2018). Elshtain, now deceased, was a public scholar and professor of ethics at the University of Chicago, as well as a member of the Lumen Christi board of directors. He also authored a chapter in "Paul Ricoeur and the Hope of Higher Education: The Just University" (Lexington, 2021) on Ricoeur's institutional ethics and higher education.

Le Chevallier, a husband and father, says he is "passionate about the mission of the Lumen Christi Institute."

"Thomas leaves behind an important legacy in the Lumen Christi Institute. As acting executive director, I intend to continue to advance its vital mission by drawing returning students to the University of Chicago into a Catholic intellectual community through a new fellows program, expanding our national impact on the academy through more summer seminar offerings, and bringing the Catholic intellectual tradition to worldwide audiences live through hybrid offerings of our Chicago lectures."

Latino Theology Enriches Church, Theologians Say



As the Latino community in the Catholic Church in the United States continues to grow — currently, almost 50% of Catholics in the United States are Latino — theological reflection on the Latino experience of God and religious practice is needful and a gift that enriches the church. This perspective inspired Lumen Christi’s eight-week Hispanic Theology Series this past spring, made possible by a grant from the Our Sunday Visitor Institute.

During one session, theologian Roberto Goizueta of Boston College spoke about Christology, not from traditional sources, but from the “lived faith” of popular religious practice within the Latino community, in particular during Holy Week, articulating a “bottom-up” theology.

Goizueta said Good Friday, as opposed to Easter Sunday, is the climax of Holy Week among Latino Catholics. On Good Friday, whole communities gather for a procession through the city streets. Biblical scenes of Christ’s Passion, his climb to Calvary and his crucifixion are acted out along the way. To be chosen to play Jesus is a great honor. This annual religious custom does not encourage or glorify suffering, said Goizueta. Rather, “Good Friday is the day when God most explicitly affirms humanity” in its experience of suffering, especially among the marginalized and the poor, he said.

On Good Friday, God becomes a companion in the people’s struggle against suffering, “by suffering with them in the person of Jesus Christ,” he said, and the people leave the procession feeling “vibrant” and “empowered.”

The focus on Good Friday in the Latino experience does not exclude the Resurrection. Instead, like St. Paul, it recognizes the interconnectedness of the Paschal Triduum: The celebration of Jesus on the day of his crucifixion points to St. Paul’s proclamation of Christ, who is both crucified and risen, Goizueta explained.

He underlined the relational character of Latino Christology, saying there is nothing more pitiable than the

self-made man in the Latino community. The communal and relational aspects of Latino culture reflect the people’s understanding of God, who abides in the eternal Trinitarian relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, at the heart of the Latino experience of Jesus is the understanding of Emmanuel, God with us, he said. Citing Fr. Virgilio Elizondo’s classic text on Latino theology, “Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise,” he underlined how the Latino experience of coming from the margins, just as Jesus did, is another important point in the Latino relationship with Christ.

Neomi De Anda of the University of Dayton, Ohio, offered her reflection on social and systemic sin and salvation. Systems of sin “unjustly mark some of the living for death, so that other parts of life may thrive,” she said.

Jesus, and the men who were crucified beside him, were among those marked for death in his time, she said, just as those who are oppressed, colonized and dominated today. While life is fragile, systemic sin makes life “even more fragile” for those marked for death, she continued. Celebrations in Latino communities are therefore “extremely important” and “one way that those who have been marked for death are creating ways to survive and thrive while attending to the fragility of life,” she said.

Peter Casarella, professor of theology at Duke University, moderated and assisted in planning the series. Casarella told The Beacon Pope Francis embodies the popular dimension of Latino theology with his insistence that priests take on the “smell of the sheep.” In the same way, Latino theology “starts from the people” and their sense of the faith, said Casarella.

However, Latino theology is conducted not for its own sake, but to enter into dialogue with other theologies and faith experiences and to present it “as a gift to the church as a whole,” he said. “It’s a way of teaching everyone in the church about ... the beauty of diversity.”

Videos of the series are available at lumenchristi.org.



McGinn continued from cover

Griffiths turned to Thomas to do much of the fundraising, organizing, and planning for the institute. To be sure, the institute would never have become such a great success story without the single efforts of many, especially the members of the board of trustees, as well as those of us who served on the Academic Advisory Committee. But Thomas was the major engine that powered the whole effort. From 1999 until his death he served as the executive director while Lumen Christi continued to grow and flourish, emerging as a major voice in contemporary Catholic intellectual life. Its success can be measured in many ways, not least in the effect its programs have had on the current generation of Catholic students, scholars, and leaders.

After his conversion to Catholicism Thomas several times experimented with the possibility of living a religious life. But he learned that religious life was not his vocation. I do not know when he may have come to see his work at Lumen Christi as a real vocation, but this is how I always perceived the dedication and single-mindedness he brought to all he did for Lumen Christi. When someone gives his all for a cause I think we are dealing with a vocation, especially when the cause is fundamentally religious. The work of directing the institute called on many of the talents that Thomas possessed in an unusual degree. Of course, it demanded organizational skill — the ability to get things done. Thomas was, indeed, an organizer, especially in the early days of Lumen Christi, when there was a smaller staff. Nonetheless, I don't think that the ability to organize was the greatest asset Thomas brought to his unusual

From top to bottom: Levergood with Profs. William Cavanaugh, David Nirenberg, and Patrick Deneen; Levergood with Bernard McGinn and Fr. Gilles Emery, O.P.; Speaking at an event with Mary Ann Glendon

vocation. I would say two qualities of Thomas that were far more important were, first, his talent as what we might call a “networker” and, second, a kind of visionary quality, an uncanny ability to discern issues, questions, and themes that intelligent Catholics needed to address. These issues were myriad, ranging across many disciplines: history, philosophy, theology, ethics, public policy, cultural issues, and so on. Thomas had some knowledge of many of these disciplines, not as an expert, but as a visionary “idea-man” who could spot things that needed to be addressed, whether in lectures, courses, conferences, panels, or whatever. Let me say a bit more about these two aspects of Thomas’ character.

I have described Thomas as a “networker,” by which I mean someone who knows lots of people, who know other people, who know other people, so that a kind of network of human potential and interaction is established that can greatly assist in fostering the success of complex programs and initiatives. Successful networking demands not only accessibility and friendliness, but also skill at putting people at ease — talents that Thomas had in abundance. He could get things done because he knew the people who could do them, and he had the ability to convince those people to take up the task, even when they were perhaps initially hesitant.

I have used the word “visionary.” What I mean is a kind of discernment, a special insight into trends and issues in Catholic thought that need greater visibility, re-affirmation, and even reconsideration. Thomas had this ability to a truly remarkable degree. How often over the years I would get a call from him, outlining his plans for coming programs for Lumen Christi and asking me what I thought about them and who might be good people to contact to help in their implementation. Sometimes I was initially surprised by some of these endeavors, but on thinking about them, I almost always agreed that “this is, indeed, a good idea.” Often, of course, Thomas asked me to get involved and I think I almost always said yes with the conviction that I would be helping to spread Catholic wisdom in the academy and in the church. It was also very hard to say no to Thomas. He was a great optimist, someone who conveyed a sense of benevolent conviction about the future that dragged along even pessimists like me.

Thomas, as I knew him, always displayed a sense of imperturbability and equanimity. He was not easily upset. This surface sense of untroubled calm, however, coexisted

with some real interior trials, sufferings, and even crosses that he rarely talked about. Fortitude is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and I think that Thomas had a great measure of the gift of fortitude that enabled him to carry on his work in what must have often been trying moments. The last thing I would like to mention is Thomas’ conversion, which he once told me about. I do not mean his conversion to Catholicism, but the prior conversion that eventually led him to Catholicism. This first conversion was his turning to God. He described it as a sudden awareness that descended on him out of the blue while he was walking down a street in New York one day. This awareness, he told me, was the conviction that “it was all true,” and that therefore God was the most important thing in his life. As he recounted the story, I was reminded of the famous account of C. S. Lewis in his autobiography, “Surprised by Joy,” of his own unlikely and unexpected conversion, the sudden influx of grace that happened to him while seated on a bus in Oxford. Grace comes when least expected.

We are all deeply saddened by the loss of this dear man and good friend. But we are not without hope, as St. Paul tells us. From that perspective it seems to me very fitting that Thomas died on the feast of the Transfiguration, the day that reminds us that we too are being transformed from glory to glory after the image of Jesus. Thomas’ transformation is now complete, so that despite our sorrow we can rejoice with him, as he hears said to him, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

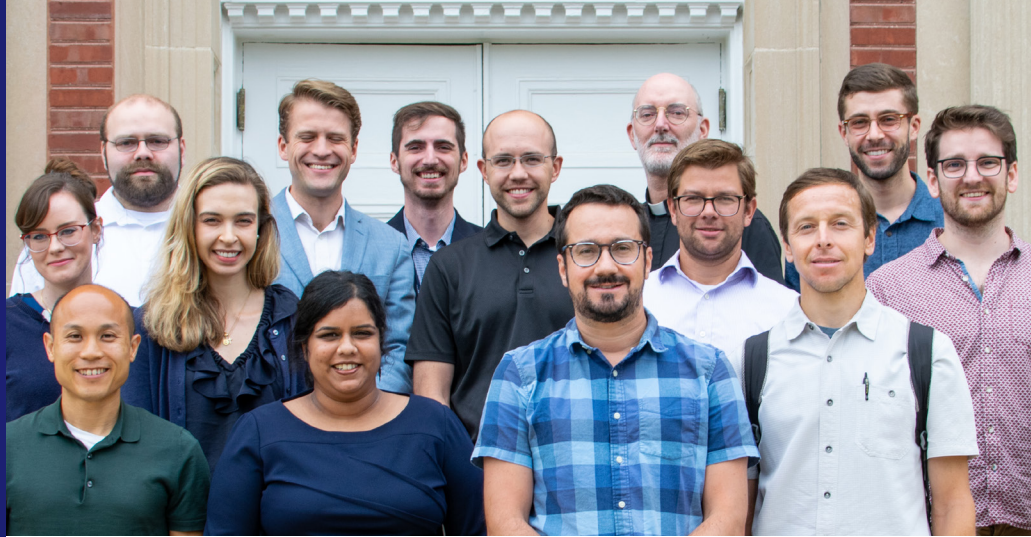
Visit our website for a full list of tributes.



“Although studying Girard’s thought was thoroughly enjoyable in its own right ... I learned a lot by watching our presenters and some very articulate student participants marshal all their academic resources and past experiences to ask great questions about the texts we read and to extrapolate some new ideas ... I’m coming away from this seminar with a deeper understanding of the Catholic intellectual tradition and the place I might have in it.”

“This Newman seminar was a tremendously productive and illuminating experience ... the quality of Fr. Fields’ instruction and the rigor of thought exemplified by my fellow participants provided rich discussions and the opportunity for true intellectual growth.”

“It was a wonderful opportunity to engage in an extremely close and careful read of a seminal text in the Christian tradition with two renowned scholars in the field, together with other stimulating participants. I very much benefited from the opportunity to take part in the seminar, and am confident it will continue to bear much fruit in my scholarly work and beyond.”



About our 2021 Summer Seminars

The Thought of René Girard

After holding a seminar for graduate students in Girard's native France in 2019, we organized a seminar for college students to study the influential anthropologist and theorist. The seminar was led by Profs. Grant Kaplan (Saint Louis University) and Trevor Merrill (Caltech) at the idyllic Joseph & Mary Retreat Center with a view of the Pacific Ocean outside Los Angeles. Participants came from universities across the country, including Yale, USC, Boston College, Hillsdale, and Catholic University of America.

Truth and Authority in Augustine's City of God

We held our graduate seminar on St. Augustine's most ambitious and sprawling work at Mundelein Seminary with Russell Hittinger (Lumen Christi Institute) and Fr. Michael Sherwin, O.P. (University of Fribourg). Participants came from across the continent, including the University of Wisconsin, Duke, Harvard, University of Toronto, Marquette, Villanova, Notre Dame, and the University of Chicago.

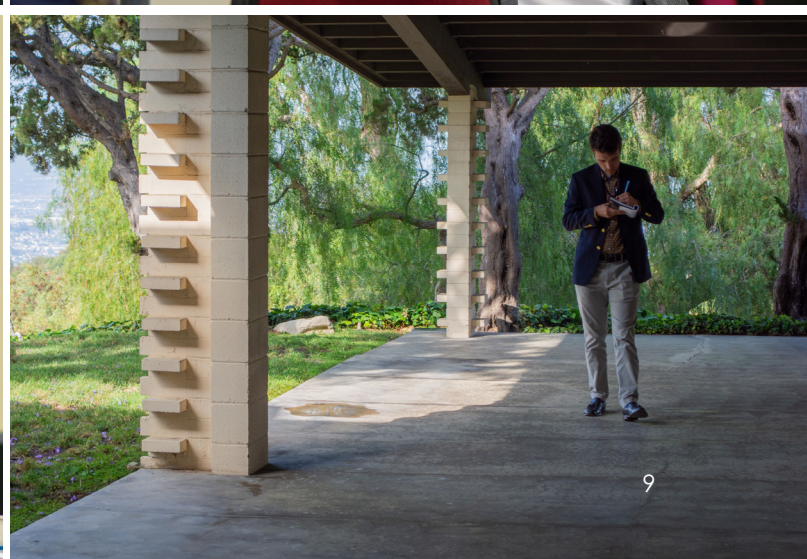
Irenaeus of Lyon's Adversus Haereses

Our first-ever patristics seminar for graduate students focused on St. Irenaeus' "Against the Heresies," one of the first systematic presentations of Christianity from the second century. Due to travel restrictions, Prof. Lewis Ayres (Durham University) and Fr. John Behr (University of Aberdeen) led the seminar virtually while participants gathered at Gavin House in Chicago. Lumen Christi Program Fellow Fr. Andrew Summerson helped lead the group discussions and organized outings, including a trip to the Art Institute of Chicago.

The Thought of John Henry Newman

For the eighth time, we hosted a graduate seminar on 19th-century convert St. John Henry Newman. This year the seminar was led for the first time by Fr. Stephen Fields, S.J. (Georgetown University) and held at Mundelein Seminary. Graduate students in the fields of theology, classics, philosophy, English, and history waded through Newman's major works.

Applications for our 2022 summer seminars are open. Visit our website for more information.





SEMINAR ALUMNUS PROFILE

Omar Fakhri

Omar Fakhri might just take the award for having attended the most Lumen Christi summer seminars. His first was on John Henry Newman in Oxford (2013), followed by “Free Choice in Aquinas” in Rome (2014), “Catholic Social Thought” in Berkeley (2019), and the most recent, on Irenaeus’ “Against the Heresies” in Chicago (2021).

This past fall, Fakhri began as an assistant professor of philosophy at Bethel University, a small Baptist liberal arts college in St. Paul, Minnesota, after completing his doctorate in philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley.

While UC Berkeley has one of the top philosophy programs in the country, Lumen Christi’s summer seminars for graduate students helped fill crucial gaps in Fakhri’s doctoral research on moral disagreement.

“There was nobody there at Berkeley that did Aquinas or any of the Newman stuff that I’m really interested in,” he said.

Fakhri’s participation in the summer seminars captures completely Lumen Christi’s mission to make the Catholic intellectual tradition a living dialogue partner with the contemporary university. He said he first heard of the seminars from one of his professors at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the late Lynne Rudder Baker, and he intends to encourage his students at Bethel University to benefit from Lumen Christi programming.

In a story that is not uncommon among scholars of philosophy and religion, Fakhri’s intellectual journey was tied to his religious quest. Born in Iraq, he immigrated to the United States with his parents at age 10. He encountered Christianity by reading the Bible as a teen and embraced evangelical Christianity at age 19.

However, during his undergraduate studies at Biola University, he read the writings of John Henry Newman

and the Fathers of the Church and asked to be received in the Eastern Orthodox Church in 2013. As an Orthodox Christian, Fakhri draws regularly from the historical sources common to the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Fakhri described the seminar on Catholic social thought as particularly formative. The holistic approach used to address moral questions aligned with his research, as well as with the questions he had been pondering more seriously in his personal life, especially after the birth of his daughter. The seminar gave him a rigorous way to sort through these questions as a young father and intellectual.

“We read through 500 pages of papal encyclicals, and they were all rich in content and very applicable to things I had thought about, even on a personal level, and that was really important to me,” he said.

Fakhri, now a father of three, said his exposure to Catholic social teaching helped him to understand how some of his intellectual concerns with abortion, euthanasia, and certain attitudes and actions in relation to children and the elderly are part of the “same movement” that John Paul II called “the culture of death,” and to consider what the late pope called “the culture of life” as a response.

The seminars also helped him make lasting friendships within the academy and connect with world-class scholars, including Fr. Ian Ker, Russell Hittinger and, this past summer, Fr. John Behr and Lewis Ayres.

Reflecting on his own experience, Fakhri spoke on the role of the intellectual life in a person’s spiritual journey of conversion to Christ.

“The role of the intellectual life is moving hearts,” he said. “Sometimes we have diminished the importance of that. But the reason we [as a culture] don’t consider [faith] is because intellectual barriers need to be knocked down first.”

JOHN BUCHMANN

Director of Development



At the top of the agenda for Lumen Christi's new director of development is seeking funding for the radical growth plan the institute's founding director, Thomas Levergood, had communicated months before his untimely death in August.

John W. Buchmann, named development director Aug. 1, said securing Levergood's vision and legacy is among his priorities for the coming year. A former Lumen Christi staffer, Buchmann returned to Lumen Christi earlier this year at Levergood's invitation.

Buchmann had worked for Lumen Christi for four years during his graduate studies at the University of Chicago Divinity School. During that time, Buchmann said Levergood grounded him in the vision of the institute and trained him in all facets of the organization.

However, upon completing his doctorate in ethics and Catholic social thought, Buchmann sought positions at institutes modeled on Lumen Christi in his home state of Pennsylvania. He served as associate director and scholar-in-residence at the Collegium Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture at the University of Pennsylvania (2017-2019). He was then executive director of the Beatrice Institute in Pittsburgh (2019-2020).

Throughout this period, Levergood accompanied Buchmann as a trusted friend and mentor, eventually inviting him to return to Lumen Christi. Buchmann quickly noted how his old

colleagues had mastered their respective spheres of responsibility since his departure, branched out into new areas, and perfected the planning, funding and execution of online and in-person events.

"Lumen Christi is the strongest I've ever seen it," said Buchmann. "It definitely punches above its weight."

Like Levergood, Buchmann embraced the Catholic faith as a young man and he found at the University of Chicago the opportunity to grow in his faith.

Thanks to Lumen Christi, said Buchmann, "I was given the opportunity to study the Catholic intellectual tradition with the greatest Catholic minds available, despite the fact that I was at a secular school."

"Thomas is the reason I am doing this work and not working as a professor," Buchmann added about his mentor's formidable influence.

Buchmann understands his new role as inviting others to connect their values and their desire to do good with Lumen Christi's programming, which is both concrete and impactful in promoting the Catholic intellectual tradition at the national and international levels.

"You're giving people the opportunity to live within their values in a very concrete way," he said. "That's important work, and I'm grateful to be able to do it."

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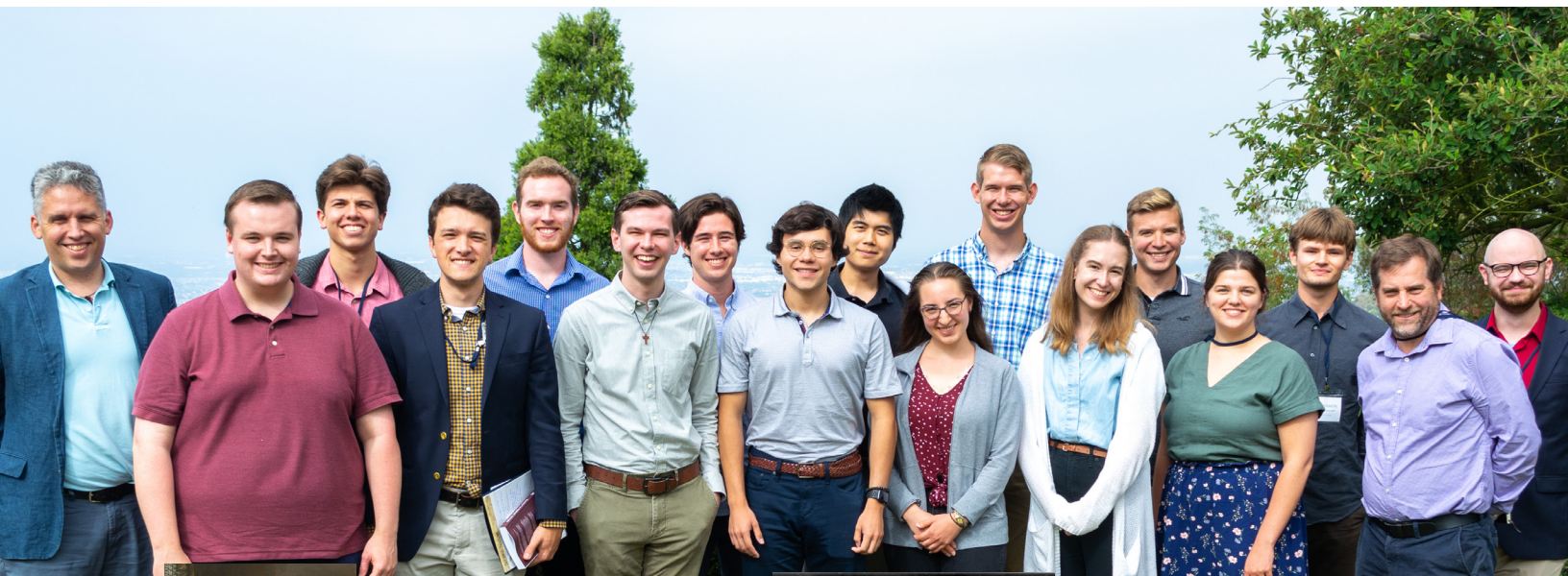
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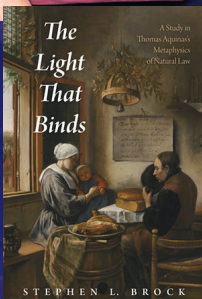
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SAVE THE DATE



THU., JAN. 20
Symposium on
The Light that Binds:
A Study in Thomas Aquinas'
Metaphysics of Natural Law
by Fr. Stephen L. Brock



WED., FEB. 2
Lecture by
Zena Hitz (St. John's College)
author of
Lost in Thought: The Hidden
Pleasures of an Intellectual Life