



# THE BEACON

NEWSLETTER OF THE LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT

SPRING 2022

## Lumen Christi wins \$3.65M Templeton grant



*Michael LeChevallier and Peter Tierney, Project Co-directors*

The Lumen Christi Institute was awarded \$3,648,000 from the John Templeton Foundation in support of a new three-year project, called “In Lumine: Supporting the Catholic Intellectual Tradition on Campuses Nationwide.”

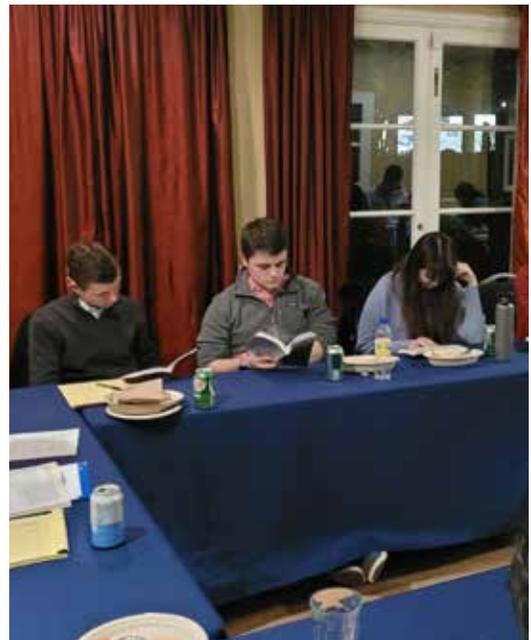
The project includes the creation of the first-ever national network of independent institutes of Catholic thought, located at some of the country’s top universities. The grant was announced Feb. 1.

Michael Le Chevallier, project co-director of the In Lumine Grant, said the grant cements the vision and ensures the legacy of Thomas Levergood, Lumen Christi’s founding executive director, who died last August after a brief illness.

*Read the full story on pages 6 & 7*

## Undergrads Consider Nietzsche’s Critique of Modernity

“In order to appreciate how Christ answers the purpose of life and the nature of the good, students must first formulate good questions and nurture appropriate doubt,” read the course introduction for a new Lumen Christi pilot — the first Lumen Christi Institute Undergraduate Reading Group. The seminar-style discussion group, which launched in February 2022 and ran through June, instructed undergraduate students at the University of Chicago under the expertise of scholar David Lyons. Lyons, who received his PhD from the University of Chicago and his JD from the University of Michigan, guided students through a critical examination of Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* and Albert Camus’s *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Both a historian at the University of Chicago and a former attorney, Lyons synthesized his scholarship, doctoral work, and legal expertise to train this cohort of undergraduate students on a critical engagement of the texts.



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Thomas Levergood †

As I finish over a year of stewarding the Lumen Christi Institute after Thomas' illness and passing, I'd like to take the opportunity to share my reflections on the nature of our work. In a special way, our work at Lumen Christi offers a unique path for the laity to contribute to Catholic intellectual culture. Through the years, I've come to appreciate the many ways in which the institute makes a place for us to be a gift to the Church. In my early years participating in Lumen Christi's student programs, I understood our organization as a "lay" institute by virtue of its organizational structure. It was founded by two committed laymen, Paul Griffiths and Thomas Levergood. The constituents we serve are lay students, and we draw primarily upon lay scholars to do so.

Over the past few years, I have come to understand even more profoundly how the institute's character partly grows from the lay vocation of those of us who work here. As underscored in the documents of Vatican II, such as *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the vocation of the laity is to transform the world according to the Gospel. We are each called to transform our local communities and, from there, to engage and transform the wider world.

Across our work, I witness how this lay vocation impacts the many worlds which Lumen Christi intersects. We work to make the Catholic intellectual tradition both visible and valued at the University of Chicago, transforming the academic climate here to include the richness of the Catholic tradition. We create networks among different academic spheres, including economists, lawyers, and scholars, to support them amidst a secular academy that fails to recognize the wisdom of the Church. We help prepare high school students for university, infused with a robust conviction in the relationship between faith and reason.

Yet the institute does not merely transform the different worlds that it connects, it also catalyzes this lay vocation in others on a very personal level. In catalyzing this lay vocation, we work to impart the dynamic breath of our tradition into the very cornerstones of the institutions we form a part of. Writing from Merton College, Oxford, where we are hosting a seminar for doctoral students, I am witness to how these students are becoming those living dialogue partners of the faith tradition, as they master the writings of St. John Henry Newman.

Through my initial conversations with our new executive director, Daniel Wasserman-Soler, I am excited to see how this aspect of our mission will continue to flourish, especially as we work even more intently in the upcoming years to help students at the University of Chicago articulate their lay vocation through their professions as the future lawyers, business leaders, civic leaders, and professors of our world.

As I sign off as Acting Executive Director and continue as a staff person to support the important work of Lumen Christi, I am grateful to the Board for entrusting the institute to me this year and to Thomas Levergood, whose life offered a beautiful model of the lay vocation as fully expressed in the contemporary university. I am convinced that our institute will continue this great gift which Thomas gave to the world – the transformation of academic institutions and campuses across the country.



Michael Le Chevallier  
Acting Executive Director

# CCJRN Conference at Georgetown Law School

The Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network (CCJRN), a national initiative of the Lumen Christi Institute led by Lumen Christi board member Judge Thomas Donnelly, held its inaugural two-day conference at Georgetown University this past spring.

The event took an innovative approach, bringing together a diversity of stakeholders in criminal justice reform, including scholars of and practitioners in criminal justice, as well as offenders and victims. A number of clergy involved in correctional ministries also attended.

A handful of brief presentations were offered to stimulate reflection and discussion among participants. Presenters included Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego and his director of the Office of Life, Peace and Justice, Robert Ehnou; Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami and Deacon Edgardo Farias of Miami's Office of Detention Ministry; Bishop Felipe J. Estevez of St. Augustine, Florida, and Dale S. Recinella, a correctional chaplain for Florida's death row; and Father Zachariah F. Presutti, S.J., founder of Thrive for Life Prison Project.

The principle goal of the conference was to "lift up the dignity of the human person and make that the center of all criminal justice reform," said Donnelly in a message to participants.

Aside from that broad objective, the organizers made the "pretty radical" decision to leave the rest — the discussions and outcomes — up to the guidance of the Spirit, Donnelly said in an interview.

"It's certainly unprecedented," he added. "I don't think there's been anything quite like this ever done (on criminal justice reform)."

Morning and evening prayer, Eucharist, confession, Adoration and the rosary were central to the conference.

"We can't solve this (issue) on our own. We need God's help," said Donnelly referring to the prominent place of prayer in the schedule, as well as to the historic and ongoing need to reform the criminal justice system from a culture of revenge.

"We have to put ourselves in the presence of Christ, who makes all things new," he said. "Without that, we're just regurgitating the same ideas that have failed."

The Judeo-Christian heritage historically has been a driving

force in criminal justice reform because it centers around the human person as a son or daughter of God, stemming from divine revelation, he explained. This heritage "should influence the way we treat human beings, both the victims of crime and the offenders," he added.

"That's a part of the human condition that people of faith recognize: No matter what has been committed ... that doesn't define you. You're defined by your relationship with God," he said.

"How would things be different in our criminal justice system if we taught the dignity of each and every human being that emanates from divine affiliation?" he posited.

The "sacrificial violence" meted out in the criminal justice system, such as the death penalty, "to achieve social unity ... is totally antithetical to the Gospel," he said. "No person's dignity should be sacrificed to the cause of any system."

Furthermore, he said, "it's totally ineffective."

Participants appreciated the prayerful and reflective nature of the conference, commenting mostly on the quality of the discussion with others.

"Informative, reflective, collaborative. Looking forward to the next steps in the implementation of ideas and actions," said criminal justice professor George Kain.

The event was co-sponsored by the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development and the law schools at Georgetown University, Boston College, Fordham University and Santa Clara University.



*Photo by Leonardo Fonseca*



## Constantinople compiles Orthodox social teaching in one document

The Lumen Christi Institute hosted an ecumenical panel discussion on the first-ever official compilation of Orthodox social teaching promulgated by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The document, endorsed by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, is titled “For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church.” It was published in 2020, shortly before the COVID-19 lockdown.

The panel discussion, held Feb. 17, was co-presented with Fordham University Orthodox Christian Studies Center and the Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies of the University of St. Michael’s College at the University of Toronto.

This event gave Lumen Christi the opportunity to situate its longstanding program in Catholic social thought within a larger ecumenical conversation.

An international committee of Orthodox scholars, commissioned by Patriarch Bartholomew, began the process of drafting the document in 2017. The principal idea was to produce a formal, coherent presentation of the social doctrine of the Orthodox Church as a follow-up to the documents and decisions adopted by the Pan-Orthodox Synod in Crete in 2016.

The drafters of the document included two friends of Lumen Christi, Aristotle Papanikolaou, theology professor and co-founding director of the Fordham University Orthodox Christian Studies Center, and Perry Hamalis, theology professor at North Central College.

The two Orthodox scholars helped organize February’s panel discussion, which included the participation of William Schweiker (University of Chicago), Msgr. Peter Schallenberg (Paderborn; Pontifical Dicastery for Integral Human Development), and Stephen Meawad (Caldwell University). They offered Protestant, Catholic and Coptic Orthodox perspectives respectively on the document.

Papanikolaou opened the panel discussion by offering a framework, explaining the process of creating the

document and its reception thus far. The conversation that followed the panel was led by Hamalis, along with University of Chicago alumna and theology professor Helen Theodoropoulos.

What is now known as Catholic social thought began with Pope Leo XII’s groundbreaking encyclical, “Rerum Novarum” (1891), in which he defines worker rights in light of the troubling social conditions caused by the Industrial Revolution and urbanization. From this foundational document, an entire systematic body of work developed in the Catholic tradition, which today serves as a moral guidepost for Christians in civic and public life.

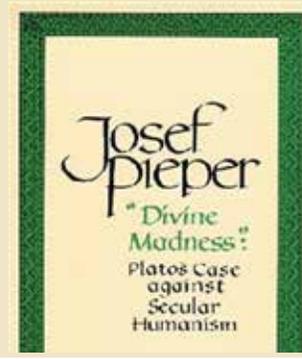
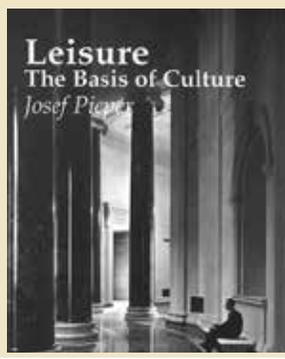
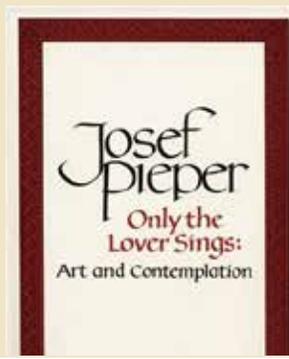
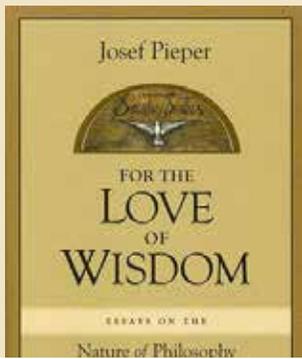
By contrast, “For the Life of the World” begins not with the particular, but with a holistic vision of the Eucharistic liturgy, from which flows its counsel on a range of social issues, such as war, poverty, and end-of-life issues.

“For the Life of the World” completes the work of a committee of Orthodox scholars — in dialogue with church leaders — to construct signposts that offer a critical reflection from an Eastern Christian perspective that can be brought to bear on contemporary issues.

The panel discussion was the first of several events on Eastern Christian themes that Lumen Christi has organized in conjunction with the Sheptytsky Institute and Fordham’s Orthodox Christian Studies Center.

More recently, a two-day symposium on Latin, Greek and Syriac hymnography was held May 15-16, featuring presentations by an ecumenical group of scholars and a concert of the world-renowned Eastern Christian choir Cappella Romana at the Rockefeller Chapel. The concert, “Icons of Sound,” included selections from ninth-century hymnographer Kassiani the Nun and hymns from the feast of the Holy Cross in Constantinople.

This summer, Lumen Christi partnered with the Sheptytsky Institute to host a graduate summer seminar on Origen of Alexandria’s “On First Principles” in Toronto. The text is foundational for both eastern and western Christian theological traditions.



## Reunited with Josef Pieper

by John-Paul Heil



A true philosopher is spurred to contemplation by wonder, from which comes joy. This truth was fundamental for Josef Pieper (1904-1997), one of the most prominent Thomists of the 20th century. Between November and March this past academic year, I led a reading group on Pieper sponsored by the Lumen Christi Institute with students and faculty I met last summer at Lumen Christi's seminar on René Girard, Fulbright scholars, and my own undergraduates from Mount St. Mary's University. In monthly meetings online, we examined some of Pieper's core ideas: the necessity of leisure and holy days to promote human flourishing in a workaday world, the connection between artistic creation and an eros oriented towards the transcendent, and the virtues as the cornerstone of a life well-lived.

"I had heard about Pieper a lot in undergrad and knew it would be helpful to be familiar with him, but hadn't yet had the opportunity to study him in any focused way," wrote one student, reflecting on our meetings. "I joined the reading group because I wanted to learn more about a figure who was both significant in a general way to the Catholic intellectual tradition and also had particular things to say about my own disciplinary interests. I was also interested in maintaining connections with the intellectual community I was introduced to at the René Girard Seminar and knew I would learn a lot from the conversation, regardless of the specific topic."

Continuing conversations begun during the summer seminar was one of my greatest joys in leading this group. Each month, I wondered at the incisive comments made by these brilliant young scholars, who so often struck on

ideas central both to Pieper's texts and the lived reality of Christian life, all the while forming a unique and tight-knit community.

"I've never really interacted with people who approach philosophy from a more religious background," said Jacob Pintar, a Fulbright ETA. "My personal reading and education have always been secular so when I heard about it being a philosophy group I expected something similar to my previous experiences. Instead, it was actually refreshing to reference God in conversations and have that be taken seriously."

Though our meetings spanned numerous time zones — with participants Zooming in from as far west as Pasadena and as far east as Bulgaria — they were marked by an intellectual generosity and openness I have rarely seen. In his essays on art, Pieper says that "to contemplate," which is both art's beginning and its final telos, "means first of all to see," and that "the eyes see better when guided by love; a new dimension of 'seeing' is opened up by love alone!" While our meetings did not create art, they did lead to contemplation. It was not just Pieper's texts, but the participants' wonder and their desire for the Truth which encouraged contemplation. It was a joyful journey we took together as a reading group, guided by the Light of Christ.

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**"the eyes see better when guided by love; a new dimension of 'seeing' is opened up by love alone!"**

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*John-Paul Heil is an instructor at Mount St. Mary's University and a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago. He served as Lumen Christi's staff liaison at the 2021 undergraduate summer seminar on René Girard.*

# Lumen Christi launches national In Lumine Network

The Lumen Christi Institute has launched a national network — the In Lumine Network — aimed at supporting the growth and development of institutes of Catholic thought at universities across the country, as well as science and religion programming.

The network is part of a three-year project, called “In Lumine: Supporting the Catholic Intellectual Tradition on Campuses Nationwide.”

The project is funded by a \$3.65-million grant, awarded to the Lumen Christi Institute by the John Templeton Foundation on Feb. 1.

The network’s founding members include the Lumen Christi Institute at the University of Chicago, the Nova Forum at the University of Southern California, the Collegium Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, the Saint Anselm Institute at the University of Virginia, COLLIS at Cornell University and the Harvard Catholic Forum at Harvard University.

These institutes operate independently of the university, serving the secular university’s faculty, students and staff with programming that sets a range of disciplines in dialogue with the Catholic intellectual tradition and forms participants in that tradition.

Members of the network will receive training and workshops on sustainable nonprofit management, including strategy development, fundraising, marketing, program management and evaluation, event planning and campus engagement.

Michael Le Chevallier, acting executive director of the Lumen Christi Institute, said the network will expand after its first year to welcome new members, including ecumenical partners.

“The founders of these institutes were frequently on parallel learning curves, treading the same ground, with limited budgets and little outside guidance,” said Le Chevallier. “A support network was needed, so each could more

efficiently and effectively promote their programming, share ideas, build on the successes of others and amplify impact.”

“The network will also allow collaboration between these institutes in advancing their shared mission,” added Le Chevallier.

All six institutes were inspired by the same vision of Lumen Christi’s founding executive director Thomas Levergood and Catholic scholars at the University of Chicago — to bring the Catholic intellectual tradition to the secular university. Cardinal Francis George, then archbishop of

Chicago, backed the vision, which resulted in the founding of the Lumen Christi Institute in 1997.

For 25 years, Lumen Christi’s mission has been to engage students and faculty at the University of Chicago in an ongoing and thoughtful dialogue between the sciences and Catholic thought through conferences and seminars with top academics at the university, such as Bernard McGinn, Father David Tracy and Jean-Luc Marion, and from around the world.

The idea soon caught on. In 2000, Levergood assisted in establishing the Saint Anselm Institute at the University of Virginia. He offered guidance in the creation the Collegium Institute in 2013, introducing its founding

board to key financial backers. He similarly advised the Nova Forum and the Harvard Catholic Forum in their founding in 2020, and COLLIS at Cornell University in 2021.

Levergood also supported the creation of several Catholic think tanks and professional associations that address issues in the areas of science, economics and criminal justice. Levergood died last August at the age of 58, after a brief battle with cancer.

Le Chevallier said the science-and-religion focus of the In Lumine Network is a response to the “enthusiasm” among students and faculty “to probe deeper questions emerging from the application of new technologies and the growing tech-oriented programs of the university.”

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As part of the grant, Lumen Christi will also organize a national science and religion summit in the project's second year.

Stephen Barr, president of the Society of Catholic Scientists, says the new Templeton-funded projects will help dispel the myth among Catholics and non-Catholics that a chasm exists between science and religion.

The Society of Catholic Scientists is an international organization that has grown since its founding in 2016 to 1,600 members in 50 countries. Its mission is to “foster fellowship among Catholic scientists and to witness to the harmony of faith and reason,” according to its website.

Barr had collaborated with Levergood and the Lumen Christi Institute, which helped organize and fund the society's first annual conference in 2017.

“Many people think that they have to choose between the Catholic faith and science,” said Barr, a professor emeritus of physics from the University of Delaware. “This is due to myths and confusions that far too often have been allowed to go unanswered.

“Fortunately, this is beginning to change, as Catholic scientists, scholars and a variety of new Catholic organizations, like Lumen Christi and others, have risen to the challenge” of addressing the gap, he said.

David Albertson is the founding director of the Nova Forum and associate professor of religion at the University of Southern California. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago, where he says his participation in Lumen Christi events had a lasting impact on his Catholic faith life and his vision for the Nova Forum.

“The Catholic intellectual tradition has a tremendous amount that it can, and should, offer as a gift to leading, private, secular universities,” he said. “As today's universities struggle to connect teaching and research, ethics and the marketplace, culture and the common good, Catholic intellectuals bring new resources, perspectives and energy to their schools.”

Albertson said being part of the In Lumine Network will allow his institute to organize new programming with science students and faculty on campus.

“So far, Nova Forum has engaged the humanities and the law school at USC,” he said.

“I hope our longer Catholic perspective will provide a platform for all disciplines to focus on the indissociable moral and religious center of all human scientific enterprises, which is being and remaining human.”

## *Lumen Christi* **IN THE NEWS**

“Grant of \$3.65 million will fund network of institutes of Catholic thought” Catholic News Service story by Laura Ieraci was picked up in diocesan and national Catholic publications coast to coast, including:

- *National Catholic Reporter*
- *America Magazine*
- *CruxNow*
- *OSV News*
- *Angelus News*
- *Boston Pilot*
- *Arlington Catholic Herald*
- *The Record: Archdiocese of Louisville*
- *Detroit Catholic*
- *Catholic Review of the Archdiocese of Baltimore*
- *Catholic Philly*
- *Catholic Sentinel*

LCI's grant also made headlines through other articles and interviews published through:

- *Aleteia*
- *Catholic News Agency*
- *Lutheran Alliance for Faith, Science, and Technology*
- The Archdiocese of Chicago's *Catholic Chicago: Beyond the Headlines*



Tributes to our founder Thomas Levergood also made the news:

- “Thomas Levergood, ce qu'il a vu et ce qu'il a fait voir,” *Communio*, by Jean-Luc Marion
- “Thomas Levergood of the Lumen Christi Institute: What He Saw and What He Brought to Light,” *National Catholic Register*

# Catholic Scientists Address *'Big Questions'* at Science and Religion Fair for Teens

The Newman Forum hosted a daylong event on science and religion that gathered high school students and Catholic scientists at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, Feb. 5.

The event, called “Big Questions and Catholic Scientists: A Science and Religion Fair for High School Students,” drew 214 participants, including 144 students from 37 high schools. Of these, 21 were Catholic schools. Teachers and parents accompanied the students. Alumni from previous Newman Forum events also participated.

Students learned from the seven scientist presenters about the harmony between faith and science, and discussed some of the big questions on the frontiers of scientific discovery.

The day began with a keynote address by Stephen Barr, founding president of the Catholic Society of Scientists and professor emeritus of physics and astronomy at the University of Delaware. Dr. Barr spoke on the topic “Science and the Catholic Faith,” pointing out how they do not mutually exclude each other, contrary to what is commonly touted.

Participants then attended three “Lightning Round Talks” of their choosing from a list of seven topics. These 30-minute presentations addressed number of provocative issues in science.

Maureen Condic, associate professor of neurobiology and anatomy at the University of Utah School of Medicine, spoke on the theme, “What Is a Human Being and

When Does Life Begin?” Her talk addressed the profound implications on society, medicine and the law of the questions regarding who is a human being and when a human being arises in the process of human development.

Natasha Toghradjian, a fourth-year graduate student at Harvard University, spoke about how the great earthquake of 1755 in Lisbon led to the development of the science of seismology by pioneering Jesuit missionaries, who set up the first stations to measure seismic activity in many areas around the world. She also spoke about the societal impact of earthquakes, including on the Catholic faith, in her presentation, “Earthquakes, their Consequences, & the Jesuit Pioneers of Seismology.”

Cory Hayes, professor of philosophy and theology at St. Joseph Seminary College in New Orleans, spoke about the trials of famed Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei and the major issues at play in his condemnation in 1663 by the Inquisition in the talk, “Modern Science, the Catholic Church, and the Galileo Affair.”

Chris Stoughton, senior scientist at the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, spoke about how science enhances a person’s view of the majesty of creation, inspiring awe and wonder, in “Wonder in Science and Faith.” Wonder, he argued, strengthens faith. He also shared stories from a variety of famed scientists and their “wonder moments,” elaborating on how these relate to the Catholic faith.

Timothy Dolch, associate professor of physics at Hillsdale College, spoke about “The Science and Theology of



Extraterrestrial Life.” He shared the latest scientific findings on the possibility of other habitable planets and rational life in the universe and how scientists conduct this research. He further addressed what the existence of other rational life would mean theologically, in particular whether such life would be made “in the image” of God.

Citing Pope Benedict XVI, Sister Stephen Patrick Joly, O.P., Ph.D, spoke about how creation and evolution are complementary rather than mutually exclusive realities. In her talk, “Evolution and Creation: A Catholic Perspective,” Sister Joly guided participants to see the harmony between evolutionary biology and the Catholic faith.

In his “Lightning Round Talk” on the theme “Is the Universe Made for Life?,” Stephen Barr spoke about how physicists have discovered in recent decades that many features of the fundamental laws of physics are “just right” to make life — including human life — possible. He addressed whether these perfect conditions are “anthropic coincidences” or if they were designed at their origin with humans in mind.

During the last session of the day, students met with the Catholic scientists one-on-one to ask them about their fields of science, their career paths, big unsolved questions in their areas of science, being a Catholic in science or anything else they were curious about.

“It was very eye opening,” said one high school participant at the end of the day. “And I was able to learn more about how religion and my faith can correlate with modern sciences.”

“It actually strengthened my faith,” said another.

“I was shocked by how science and faith can be correlated. I also enjoyed learning about science fields I’m interested in as well. It had a positive impact on me,” said a third student.

In a survey completed at the end of the day, all of the student respondents said the fair helped them realize that a conflict does not exist between faith and science. The vast majority (over 88%) said the fair helped them see how the Catholic faith interacts with certain scientific fields, and about 70% of respondents said they felt encouraged by the fair to pursue a science major in college.

The Newman Forum is a program of the Lumen Christi Institute that works to ground teenagers in the church’s tradition of an integrated intellectual and spiritual life in response to the high disaffiliation among young Catholics. The median age for disaffiliation among young Catholics is 13; 75% of lapsed Catholics report having left as teens due to unresolved questions related to the proof of the existence of God and the relationship between science and religion.

Through a diverse program of in-person and online events, the Newman Forum encourages teens to seek out the Catholic intellectual tradition in college, gives them tools to repudiate narratives about the incompatibility of faith and science, prepares them for leadership and urges them to pursue the meaning of living a good life.

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# Highlights 2022 EVENTS



Conversation on *Lost in Thought: the Hidden Pleasures of the Intellectual Life* with Zena Hitz

**FEBRUARY 2**

CCJRN Panel on “Redeeming Punishment: Catholic Approaches to Criminal Justice Reform”



**FEBRUARY 10**



Lecture on “Walker Percy on the Pursuit of Happiness in Apocalyptic Times” with Jennifer Frey

**FEBRUARY 23**

Lecture on “Negotiating Tragedy and the Tragic: Discursive, Performative, and Interpretive Strategies in Late Ancient Christian Literature”



**MARCH 30**



Lecture on “Bernard of Clairvaux: Writing a Biography of the Difficult Saint” with Brain Patrick McGuire

**APRIL 28**

*Undergrad reading group continued from page 1*

Students engaged in careful dialogue over many claims and questions. In Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, students confronted his famous claim “We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers: and with good reason.” In Camus’s *The Myth of Sisyphus*, students debated the famous question of how one finds hope in a seemingly absurd universe. One student who participated in the course was so intrigued that he brought 35 fellow undergraduates and members of the University of Chicago Skeptics Society to a Lumen Christi lecture on Faith and Reason by Ph.D. in Astrophysics, Fr. John Kartje, Rector of Mundelein Seminary.

“It was incredibly valuable to read Nietzsche in the context of Lumen Christi’s curriculum based in the Catholic intellectual tradition” said Nathaniel Gibbs, Political Science and History major, University of Chicago, ’24. “Through careful examination and lively discussion guided by Dr. Lyons, a sobering account of the world after the death of God was presented with all that this entails; boons and pitfalls, strengths and weaknesses, possible improvements and dangers. Investigating this world demonstrated to me that despite the promise of emancipation, the death of God is more likely to lead to a nihilistic population and a world devoid of beauty.”

“Professor Lyons did a great job leading us through Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*. It’s a challenging text, both because of Nietzsche’s bombastic style and because of the 125 years of reactions and responses which color our understanding of the essay itself. Professor Lyons didn’t shy away from the emphatic or controversial, and that willingness to confront the text head-on stimulated fruitful discussion,” said Aidan Stenson, Fundamentals major, University of Chicago ’23.

The reading group ran for five months through both the winter and spring quarters, and we hope to continue it as an annual program as part of the Lumen Christi Institute’s mission of both introducing and forming top university students in the Catholic intellectual tradition.

# THE HON. THOMAS MORE DONNELLY

## *Director of the Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network*



The Honorable Thomas More Donnelly believes criminal justice reform begins with each individual working in the system bringing greater respect and recognition of the dignity of each human person — including alleged and convicted offenders.

“How would things be different if we centered our whole criminal justice system on the dignity of each and every human being ... that emanates from divine affiliation?” he asked during a recent interview.

In search of an opportunity to discuss and pray on this question, Donnelly headed a two-day conference this spring which gathered both scholars and practitioners in the criminal justice system from across the country at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. (read about the conference on page 3).

The conference was the first of the Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network (CCJRN), which Donnelly established with the late Thomas Levergood, founding executive director of the Lumen Christi Institute, in August 2020. The interdisciplinary network seeks to introduce Catholic tradition and social teaching into the discussions being had on creating of a more just and human criminal justice system.

Donnelly, an associate judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, is longtime participant and supporter of Lumen Christi’s programs — among them the Cultural Forum, which he directed in 2016-2017 — and currently serves on the Lumen Christi board.

He began his distinguished career as a public defender in Chicago for 13 years, where he says he “encountered Christ” in each of the people he defended, relying on the frequent reception of the sacraments “so that the scales (could be) lifted from my eyes to see the Christ in the person who is suffering.”

In 2000, he was sworn in as associate judge of the Circuit

Court and has presided over some 300 jury trials since then.

In his service to the legal profession, Donnelly has been the president of the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago, chair of both the John Howard Association and the Illinois Judicial College Board, and on various committees related to promoting and ensuring professional and ethical conduct.

He is currently vice-chair of the National Center for the Laity, chair of the Illinois Judicial College Board of Trustees and faculty for the National Judicial College. The latter two organizations train judges in the United States.

Donnelly has taught at Loyola University Chicago’s law school since 1987, as well as classes at the law schools of the University of Chicago, Washington and Lee University (Lexington, Virginia), Marquette University (Milwaukee) and DePaul University.

He is the author several published papers and essays.

Several organizations have celebrated Donnelly’s contributions, conferring upon him several awards, including Catholic Lawyer of the Year from the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago in 2014, the Harold Sullivan Award from the Illinois Judges Association in 2018, and the Impact Award from the Center for Disability and Elder Law in 2019.

Donnelly maintains the Christian call to love applies in all public spheres, including in criminal justice.

“The obligatory duty to love... has to be central to our work in the world, even where it’s the work of punishment, even if it’s the work of judgment,” he said. “It’s never really been tried. But it’s worth it. It’s worth a try.”

Donnelly and his wife, Anne, live in Chicago and they have four sons.

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