

Lumen Christi Partners with Our Sunday Visitor Institute to Engage “The Nones”

With the aid of an Our Sunday Visitor Institute grant, Lumen Christi is planning three signature symposia

The Lumen Christi Institute is pleased to announce a partnership with the Our Sunday Visitor Institute (OSVI) designed to engage religiously unaffiliated millennials (“the nones”) at the University of Chicago.

According to statistics from the Pew Forum and the Public Religions Research Institute, more than one third of millennials identify as religiously unaffiliated, and the Catholic Church is experiencing the greatest decline in membership of any major religion in America. These numbers signal that young Americans do not understand Catholicism to be capable of sustaining them and giving them meaning amid the exigencies of modern life. Many young Americans labor under a variety of misconceptions about the nature of Catholic teaching and practice, presuming the Church to be irrational, elitist, authoritarian, and inherently antagonistic both toward contemporary scientific findings and the ethos of a globally connected world.

Building on its flagship University Program, which brings the richness of the Catholic intellectual tradition to the University of Chicago, Lumen Christi will host three two-part events with the support of the OSVI. These events will aim at overcoming the perception that Catholicism is intellectually, morally, and spiritually untenable in the modern world.

The first event, a symposium on “Action vs. Contemplation,” will gather four scholars to discuss the themes of a book of the same name published in 2018 by the University of Chicago Press. The panelists, including the book’s authors, will address how to find meaningful work in a modern market economy, the relationship between leisure and work, and the relationship between the sciences and the humanities. In the week following the symposium, Lumen Christi will host a colloquium for students and invite them to explore contemplation as a concept and practice.

The second event is the March 20, 2019 symposium “Financial Markets and Moral Inquiry.” Pew polls show that many American “nones” identify religion as a social benefit to society. This event will highlight how Catholic social teaching furnishes a moral framework conducive to the common good. Featuring Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, the symposium will gather scholars of finance, economics, and Catholic social teaching to discuss marketplace ethics and explore the recent Vatican document *Oeconomica et Pecuniariae Quaestiones*. A student colloquium on *Rerum Novarum*—the 1891 document of Leo XIII generally considered the first social teaching encyclical—and Catholic social teaching will follow.

Finally, a fall symposium titled “Beauty in Nature” will address the prevalent assumption, which polls indicate is widespread among millennials, that the truths of science and religion are ultimately in conflict. The purpose of this symposium is to broaden students’ understanding of the paradigms of scientific and religious inquiry and to invite them to explore how scientifically informed aesthetic questions challenge the conceptualization of nature as a mechanistic system. Following the symposium students will participate in a colloquium on “The True, the Good, and the Beautiful.”

Thomas Levergood, founder and executive director of the Lumen Christi Institute, said of the OSVI grant that “it will enable us to make the University of Chicago a site for exploring the questions that those who leave the Church too often feel the Church cannot convincingly address.”

“We hope these symposia and student colloquia will dispel that perception and replace it with a vision of the Catholic intellectual tradition as vibrant and living.”

Each symposium will be filmed and subsequently made available as video and audio via Lumen Christi’s website.

Thanks to the generosity of the OSVI, these programs will equip Catholics at the University of Chicago to better engage “the nones” and will invite the “nones” themselves into dialogue with the Catholic intellectual tradition.

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Our Sunday Visitor

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