



THE BEACON

NEWSLETTER OF THE LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT

WINTER 2024

SUMMER SEMINARS EXPAND ACROSS DISCIPLINES, CONTINENTS

For the past fifteen years, the Lumen Christi Institute's summer seminar program has become a gold-standard for intensive doctoral coursework and world-class intellectual formation in the Catholic intellectual tradition. This year, we held 10 summer seminars – the most in our history. Next summer, we'll be beating that number as we host 11 seminars.

The seminars are designed to convey in one week the equivalent of a semester-long course, so that students can use the intellectual formation over the tenure of their own academic careers once they become future faculty. Student alumni who have passed through the Lumen Christi Institute's summer seminar program currently teach at Harvard University, the University of Notre Dame, the University of Dallas, and many other institutions. Led by senior scholars, these seminars provide crucial fellowship opportunities, as well as the support that Catholic students at secular universities need in their pursuit of truth. In addition to engaging with texts from the Catholic intellectual tradition, the camaraderie that develops among the students makes a lasting impact on their professional and personal lives.

continued on page 6

"PHENOMENAL
AND LIFE-CHANGING"

"EASILY THE BEST
SEMINAR I'VE EVER
ATTENDED"

2 LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

3 AUTUMN QUARTER OVERVIEW

4 INTERVIEW WITH PROF. PETER CASARELLA

6 SUMMER SEMINARS FORM NEXT GENERATION

9 DONOR PROFILE: MICHAEL MARIANI

10 INTERVIEW WITH GRAD STUDENT READING GROUP
LEADER SAM LANDON

LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE

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Dear friends of the institute,

Mrs. Zita C. Gavin, one of our most ardent supporters, passed away peacefully in the presence of her family on December 13. A Pennsylvania native, Mrs. Gavin was married to James Gavin, with whom she had five sons. As her beautiful obituary attests, she was “devoted to her family and fiercely committed to her sons.”



As a philanthropist, Mrs. Gavin was inspired by her dear friend, Georgiana Cass, a Cuban immigrant who became an accountant, comptroller, and eventually a lay Dominican who served as a catechist and philanthropist in Honduras. Likewise, Mrs. Gavin and her husband generously collaborated with Catholic organizations that served economically disadvantaged communities domestically and abroad.

The Gavins also recognized a more subtle form of poverty, that of the spirit. As Mrs. Gavin put it herself, “We need to promote Christ at all different levels. Lumen Christi functions at the scholarly level. In these times, the Church certainly needs more Augustines.”

At the Lumen Christi Institute, we remember her name daily. Through her generosity, we were able to acquire our lovely home in Hyde Park in 2011. Since then, hundreds of programs have taken place at Gavin House, offering the university community countless opportunities to learn about the Catholic Church’s intellectual tradition.

In August, I was able to pay Mrs. Gavin a visit, which gave me a glimpse into her beautiful heart. During our conversation, her zeal for the salvation of souls was evident. My colleague shared with her that our Newman Forum for high school students — one of her areas of special interest — was growing. Our annual summer workshop increased from 25 to 35 student participants and our annual conference had grown to well over 200 students. I think I expected Mrs. Gavin to congratulate us on these numbers. But she didn’t do that. She just said, “I want more!”

As we celebrate the birth of our Lord, the light of the world, please join me in giving thanks for the life of Mrs. Zita Gavin. Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. May her generosity and her example continue to bear fruit for the salvation of souls.

Please keep Mrs. Gavin and her family in your prayers.

Daniel Wasserman-Soler
Executive Director



OCT 19: “Romano Guardini on Technology and the Liturgy” with Peter Casarella (Duke Divinity School)



OCT 20: “Byrd of a Feather: A Concert Celebrating Renaissance Composer William Byrd” with Schola Antiqua

FALL 2023

53
events

1,307
in-person
attendees

150
online
attendees



NOV. 11: “Doing Justice and Loving Mercy: A Community Conversation on Criminal Justice Reform” with Daniel Hourani (Team Wellness) and Judge Terrence Berg (U.S. District Court of Eastern Michigan)



NOV 9: “Integrity, Creation, and a Restless Heart: Augustine’s Contribution to Philosophy” with Jared Ortiz (Hope College)



OCT. 25: “Getting to the Practical: Economics, Decision Making, and the Virtues in Catholic Thought” with Andrew Yeungert (Pepperdine University)



An Interview with Prof. Peter Casarella (Duke Divinity School)

LCI: You've been involved with the Lumen Christi Institute for a long time. What's the history of your involvement with LCI?

PC: I first became involved in the early stages when I helped Thomas Levergood organize a panel on theology that included Cardinal George and David Tracy. I think that event took place almost twenty-five years ago. After that I consulted with Thomas, and he consulted with me about events, figures, and ideas. From 2007-2013 I taught at DePaul University in Chicago while living in Hyde Park and had more opportunities to attend events sponsored by the Lumen Christi Institute (LCI). In sum, LCI has had a big influence on me both as an organizer of events and as a participant. During all those diverse activities, I never lost sight of the fact that Thomas and Paul Griffiths began Lumen Christi with a simple invitation to graduate students at the Divinity School to participate in the liturgy of the hours. At its core, LCI is a fellowship that includes equal measures of friendship, intellectual debate, and prayer.

LCI: Why did you found Fons Vitae and how has LCI's model of a Catholic intellectual institute served as an inspiration?

PC: I came to Duke in 2020 and began shortly after that to discuss the idea with Reinhard Hütter since he lives in Durham and likes to take long walks. About two weeks before Thomas passed, I told him that Reinhard and I were drafting a vision statement for a Catholic institute at Duke modeled on LCI. He was very pleased. Reinhard, Janet Martin Soskice (the Warren Chair in Catholic Theology at Duke Divinity), and Edgardo Colón-Emeric, the Dean of Duke Divinity, saw the need to build up Catholic intellectual life at this historically Methodist institution. Most students who come to Duke are either STEM or trying hard to incorporate some aspect of STEM into their curriculum. In this context there is a burning need to counter technocratic narrowness with genuine wisdom about human persons and the cosmos while still fostering a scientifically-grounded, open-ended, and broadly humanistic dialogue between religion and science.

Our first summer seminar was made possible because of the generosity of the *In Lumine Network*, through the '*In Lumine: Supporting the Catholic Intellectual Tradition on Campuses Nationwide*' (Grant #62372) from the John Templeton Foundation. We focused on Engineering because it is a common discipline for



Duke students and because we were fortunate to be able to work with Sr. Damien Marie Savino, F.S.E. as the co-instructor. We learned a lot, shared daily Mass, shoveled manure on a farm, and cooked and shared a meal on the last night. It was an amazing experience.

LCI: What are significant accomplishments in the founding

"The face of the U.S. Catholic Church is also more diverse than it was immediately after the Council, and the challenges that we face are greater and more threatening...Universities need an intellectual component that goes beyond an occasional lecturer coming from the outside."

of Fons Vitae, and where do you see the institute going in the future?

PC: Troy Kassien, program coordinator for Fons Vitae, came to us from the Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame. He has lots of experience at what we are doing and has been a real gift. My colleagues at Duke and Duke Divinity have also offered their encouragement. We hope to launch a Certificate in Catholic Studies for Duke Divinity students in the fall of 2024.

This coming semester will be busy. We will host a short non-credit, virtual seminar on Newman's *Idea of a University*, reading

groups on Augustine's *Confessions* and Hirschfeld's *Aquinas and the Market*, a webinar on global food scarcity, and a screening of *The Shroud: Face to Face* with a conversation with the Director. Andrew Davison, a scientist/theologian from Cambridge University, will also visit to speak about extraterrestrials and theology. Thomas Pfau is hosting a major symposium on European Theology and Poetry since 1800, and we are working with the Theology, Medicine, and Culture initiative at Duke Divinity to co-host Daniel Sulmasy, MD from Georgetown University.

In five years, I would like to see us reach a larger audience with events that speak to the presence of the Church in the local region and in the global South of Roman Catholicism. While still working with In Lumine and its partners, I would also like to partner with Catholic institutions in the South of the U.S. like Belmont Abbey University and the Catholic Studies program at Emory because Catholic education in this part of the country, where Catholicism is still growing, needs vital support and basic intellectual nourishment. We have untapped resources here at Duke, not just in myriad technical fields, but also in the arts, in ecumenism, and in interreligious dialogue. As we bring in new supporters and friends, we would love to offer more programs that serve these diverse communities and partners.

LCI: Where do you think institutes for Catholic thought at non-catholic universities need to go next? What's the future?

What roles do you see these institutes playing for the secular academy and/ or for the Church?

PC: There have been radical changes on college campuses in the last fifty years but some of the needs for young people have not and will not change. The original vision of the Newman Centers for the United States was in some ways very close to the humanistic vision of Cardinal Newman himself, as he articulated that vision in his *The Idea of a University*. After the Second Vatican Council, a more pastoral focus dominated, which led to getting lay Catholics on campus more involved in liturgy, music ministry, retreats, and small groups. The intellectual component unfortunately got shunted to the side. Those developments were in some ways necessary and reflect the growing pains of the U.S. Catholic Church right after the Council. The reaction to that has been new efforts that focus more on apologetics, discernment of a vocation, and the much neglected ground floor of faith formation. FOCUS, Fr. Mike Schmitz, Word on Fire, and many other digital platforms now occupy this new space that were completely absent when I was in college. The face of the U.S. Catholic Church is also more diverse than it was immediately after the Council, and the challenges that we face are greater and more threatening. Non-Catholic universities still need a strong, pastorally-oriented, and hospitable chaplaincy. A Catholic Institute is never a substitute for that. But they also need an intellectual component that goes beyond an occasional lecturer coming from the outside....





A Few Highlights

This year was an exciting one for the summer seminar program. We hosted our first *Monastic Wisdom* seminar for women (co-presented with the St. Anselm Institute and Our Lady of the Angels Monastery), which offered a unique fusion of prayer and study. In addition to lectures, reading and discussion, each morning the seminar participants joined the sisters at 6:15 a.m. for Lauds, participating in the prayerful rhythm of monastic life, cadenced by the divine office. This seminar articulated the conviction that monastic wisdom and discipline must be lived to be understood and appreciated.

“Engaging, enriching, formative, informative, and enlightened.”

A couple of other seminars exploring the relationship between theology and science also integrated study, prayer, and...farm work! At the *Theology for Engineers and Scientists* seminar at Duke University (co-presented with Fons Vitae and Nova Forum), students discussed how technocracy can obviate the human person, while picking organic vegetables from the Duke campus farm to cook their own dinner. One student wrote, “The seminar was really engaging, enriching, informative, formative and enlightened us in many ways, especially

regarding the harmony between faith and science. We have been equipped to address the challenges of atheistic materialism and the technocratic paradigm. We have learnt the dangers of misguided anthropocentrism. We have learnt to relate better with our common home, the environment. Above all, we learnt how to work together to make the world a better place.”

Students participating in *Explorations in Integral Ecology* (co-presented with COLLIS and co-sponsored by the St. Kateri Institute) did the same on the Cornell campus farm. This year was also the first that we hosted a new seminar on *Religion and Human Flourishing* (co-presented with the Harvard Catholic Forum and the Human Flourishing Program) at Harvard University. Students explored the relationship between religion and human flourishing from the perspective both of the Christian theological tradition and contemporary social science. One student reflected, “Participating in this seminar was an excellent experience. We examined the concept of human flourishing from an interdisciplinary perspective, incorporating reflection from theology, philosophy, and the social sciences.” All three of these seminars were made possible through the support of grant #62372 from the John Templeton Foundation, “In Lumine: Promoting the Catholic Intellectual Tradition on Campuses Nationwide.”

Another seminar, *The Thought of René Girard: Understanding the Faith in a Secular Age* took place on the very





campus where Girard himself taught: Stanford University. Students got to meet with his biographer Cynthia Haven. The fruit of friendship itself made the collaboration between Lumen Christi Institute and Stanford's campus possible. Personal friends of Girard partnered with the Institute to host the students there and explore what Girard's ongoing legacy means for Christian thought.

“The people Lumen Christi attracts are truly exceptional and the friendships I formed during this week are such an encouragement to me for how I can integrate a lively faith with a robust academic and professional life, with wonderful people all along the way.”

Two of our seminars took place in Europe this past summer. The *Economics and Catholic Social Thought* seminar in Rome, Italy allowed students and faculty to do a pilgrimage in the “eternal city,” and meet with Vatican officials concerned with the Church's social and economic teachings. Students participating in the *John Henry Newman* seminar visited key sites around Oxford, England tied to John Henry Newman's life, including the Birmingham oratory, founded by John



2023 Summer Seminars BY THE NUMBERS

10

Seminars held in Oxford, UK; Rome, Italy; Washington, DC; Berkeley, CA; Cambridge, MA; Crozet, VA; Ithaca, NY; Durham, NC; Stanford, CA; & Toronto

Participants, including
68 Graduate Students,
21 Undergraduates,
16 Faculty/Staff/Postdocs,
3 Professionals

136

77

Universities represented by participants in our 2023 seminars

Disciplines represented by participants, including Environmental Science, Business, Political Science, & Theology

26

21

Faculty experts who taught the student participants of our 2023 seminars

Henry Newman in 1848, after his conversion to the Catholic Church.

One of our longest running seminars takes place every other year at UC Berkeley, examining the work of Augustine of Hippo in *Truth and Authority in Augustine's City of God*. Doctoral students spent seven days with long-time friend of the Institute and resident-scholar Dr. Russell Hittinger poring over Augustine's magnum opus, exploring UC Berkeley, and building connections with one another that will last a lifetime. One of the students told us after the fact, "The people Lumen Christi attracts are truly exceptional and the friendships I formed during this week are such an encouragement to me for how I can integrate a lively faith with a robust academic and professional life, with wonderful people all along the way."

Learn more about our eleven seminars for next summer 2024!

Scan the QR code below to get more information on the upcoming seminars.



lumenchristi.org/seminars

2023 Summer Seminars

Catholic Social Thought in Business Education

May 23 - 26 at the Catholic University of America

with James Otteson (University of Notre Dame), Lloyd Sandelands (University of Michigan), Msgr. Martin Schlag (University of St. Thomas), Andreas Widmer (Catholic University of America)

Monastic Wisdom: The Schola Caritatis

Presented with Our Lady of the Angels Monastery and St. Anselm Institute

June 5 - 11 at Our Lady of Angels Monastery, Crozet, VA

Explorations in Integral Ecology:

Science, Theology, and Creation

Presented with COLLIS and co-sponsored by the St. Kateri Institute

June 18 - 24 at Cornell University

with Sr. Damien Marie Savino, F.S.E. (Aquinas College) and Fr. Terrence Ehrman, C.S.C. (University of Notre Dame)

Economics and Catholic Social Thought: A Primer

June 19 - 23 in Rome, Italy

with Kirk Doran (University of Notre Dame), Mary Hirschfeld (University of Notre Dame), Joseph Kaboski (University of Notre Dame), and Msgr. Martin Schlag (University of St. Thomas)

Theology for Engineers and Scientists:

Technology, Environment, and the Pursuit of Wisdom

Presented with Fons Vitae and Nova Forum

June 25 - July 1 at Duke University

with Peter Casarella (Duke University) and Sr. Damien Marie Savino, F.S.E. (Aquinas College)

Gregory Nazianzen's Five Theological Oration

June 25 - July 1 at the University of Toronto

with Lewis Ayres (Durham University) and Fr. Andrew Summerson (Sheptytsky Institute)

The Thought of John Henry Newman

July 1 - 8 at Merton College, Oxford University

with Fr. Stephen Fields, S.J. (Georgetown University)

The Thought of Rene Girard:

Understanding the Faith in a Secular Age

July 9 - 15 at Stanford University

with Grant Kaplan (St. Louis University), Trevor Cribben Merrill (Caltech), and Cynthia Haven (National Endowment for the Humanities)

Truth and Authority in Augustine's City of God

July 30 - August 5 at UC Berkeley

with Russell Hittinger (Lumen Christi Institute) and Fr. Michael Sherwin, O.P. (Angelicum)

Religion and Human Flourishing

Presented with Harvard Catholic Forum and

the Human Flourishing Project at Harvard University

August 7 - 11 at Harvard University

with Brendan Case (Harvard University), Jennifer Frey (University of Tulsa), and Tyler VanderWeele (Harvard University)





Michael Mariani a benefactor profile

Michael Mariani, a Boston-based Principal in PwC's Advisory practice and faithful supporter of the Lumen Christi Institute, has made a transformative gift to name the dining room in Lumen Christi's graduate residence in honor of the institute's founder, Thomas Levergood. Mariani earned his BA in English from the University of Chicago in 1992, and formed a lasting friendship with Thomas Levergood during his time on campus. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to interview him during his visit to the Woodlawn House.

What is your connection to the University of Chicago?

The University of Chicago is where I attended college, and where I met my wife. This special connection to the University of Chicago extends to others in my family – my sister and brother also attended and met their spouses at this school.

You knew the Lumen Christi Institute's founder, Thomas Levergood, from way back—even before his conversion to Catholicism. Could you tell us a bit about that?

I met Thomas in my sophomore or junior year of college. Pre-conversion Tom was still in the early days of his spiritual journey, but even then, he was driven by a passion for the union of the life of the mind with the life of the spirit. The Lumen Christi Institute's unique niche at the intersection of the Academy and the Catholic intellectual tradition is a powerful expression of this union.

Why did you decide to become a supporter of the Lumen Christi Institute?

I think the Lumen Christi Institute's celebration of the Catholic intellectual tradition is important. Institutes such as LCI truly vitalize and strengthen the tradition of our faith. This type of inquiry is necessary for the Church and world today. Furthermore, the mission of LCI dovetails well with the culture of the life of the mind at the University of Chicago. I think there's a lot of push in today's culture toward an easy or simplistic certainty, but there are deep questions and some deep thinking behind the church that can help us. As Thomas loved to say, "it is the longest continuous intellectual tradition in the world."

You've just made a contribution to name the dining room in the graduate residence in Thomas Levergood's honor. Can you tell us about what that means to you?

My gift is a way to continue to support the programming of LCI, but also to recognize Thomas's contributions and continue the growth of the Lumen Christi Institute.

The dining room is a space for community and connection, and that's a big part of what LCI is about. There's a strong community of students, faculty, clergy and staff behind all of LCI's programs, who give LCI its vitality.

If you are interested in learning about naming and tribute opportunities with the Lumen Christi Institute, please contact John Buchmann at jwbuchmann@lumenchristi.org.



Into the World of Franz Kafka with Sam Landon a glimpse at a graduate student reading group

This past autumn, Sam Landon led a reading group of twenty-five graduate students who explored the puzzling and alienating worlds of Franz Kafka. We sat down with Sam to learn more. A graduate student at the University of Chicago Divinity School and a student program coordinator for the Lumen Christi Institute, Sam has also assisted with the Newman Forum program for high school students.

LCI: What's your program and can you tell us about some of your intellectual projects?

SL: I'm an MA student at the University of Chicago's Divinity School, specializing in the New Testament and Early Christianity. My project is situated in early ideas of the body, the relation between ecclesial and spiritual authority, and the interaction between Christian and Jewish communities, especially in the Greek and Syriac Fathers.

LCI: What's your experience with LCI, and how has it intersected with your faith journey?

SL: I first learned about LCI before I was even Catholic, when I was in my first year of undergraduate studies, which I also did at the University of Chicago. I was intrigued by a poster for an LCI event titled "Angels, Demons, Heaven, and Hell: On Christian 'Mythology' and the Spiritual Life," since I was being drawn more and more towards apostolic Christianity at the time. I converted to Catholicism later that year in 2018. Eventually, I was drawn back to LCI in the capacity of helping the Newman Forum program.

LCI: Can you tell us more about working with the Newman



Forum, and how have you witnessed students' faith impacted by these programs?

SL: Most of my LCI projects have been assisting at the Newman Forum events for high school students. I value this experience because it lets me see the faith of my younger Christian brothers and sisters. One anecdote that jumps to mind is how a conference we held for high school students earlier in 2023 ended with Adoration. Seeing dozens of students in quiet prayer was beautiful. Students voiced their appreciation of the opportunity to rest in Christ's presence and talk with him about what they just learned. Some students shared that this was their first experience ever of Adoration.

LCI: Why did you choose Kafka for the reading group you led?

SL: Kafka is a weird guy, and that's enough of a reason to want to read him. A classic question is, how much is he influenced by religious thought, especially Christianity and Judaism? He integrates those themes with the modern world and its relationship to tradition. I'm primed to see religious and especially Christian readings in Kafka, so I wanted to discuss those and other possibilities with other students.





This autumn, graduate students gathered at Gavin House at least three times a week for reading groups, master classes, seminars and social events, learning from world-class professors and building a unique community at the university.

LCI: Do you think LCI’s student reading groups are valuable to the culture at the University of Chicago?

SL: I think LCI’s reading groups are one of the most effective ways that students can deal with the “big questions.” This is a quintessential UChicago answer, but being told about texts and questions in secondary literature just doesn’t bring you into a discussion the way that engaging with primary sources does. Further, reading groups like those at LCI show students that they can engage with these big questions in community.

LCI: Who’s coming to these reading groups? How are they forming community?

SL: One of the great strengths of these reading groups is that they bring students into the LCI circle who wouldn’t otherwise be there. As I said, I was initially drawn to LCI because of an event that discussed medieval Christian thought, but that’s not everyone’s wheelhouse. The Kafka group drew several students who had never been to LCI before. They saw a poster and a title, thought it was interesting, and showed up! Now, they’re part of the more intimate community of Gavin House and LCI. Reading groups are a great “on-ramp” to the rest of LCI’s program-

ming – and thus to the Catholic intellectual tradition.

LCI: What were some questions or new insights that emerged from the group discussion of Kafka?

SL: I’ll never think about law the same way again. Without getting too detailed, I think that Kafka presents a view where (some) law is, on a certain level, unknowable and thus adherence to it is an act of faith. I still wonder whether this view only works in a religious context or outside of that context as well. One debate that emerged from the group was whether political readings of Kafka are accurate or helpful. I’ll keep my own position close to the chest, but that earnest disagreement within the small community was productive for everyone!

How do you navigate a world beyond comprehension? Do law and justice care about the individual? What are the causes of modern anxieties, and can we find peace?





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SAVE THE DATE

FEB 10

Red Mass and Lecture for Legal Professionals

a lecture by Lu Ann Homza to follow

FEB 17

White Mass and Lecture for Medical Professionals

a lecture by Sister Teresa Mary Kozlovski, RSM, MD to follow

MAR 20

West Suburban Catholic Culture Series on "Faith and Reason"

a lecture by Bronwen McShea

APR 4

Magis Lecture | Do We Know More than the Apostles? Or, Do Doctrines Develop?

a lecture by Lewis Ayres

www.lumenchristi.org/events

Jennifer Martin (University of Notre Dame) and Jason Baxter (University of Notre Dame) dialogue during "Dante the Theologian: a Conversation" in downtown Chicago

