



# THE BEACON

NEWSLETTER OF THE LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT

SUMMER 2020

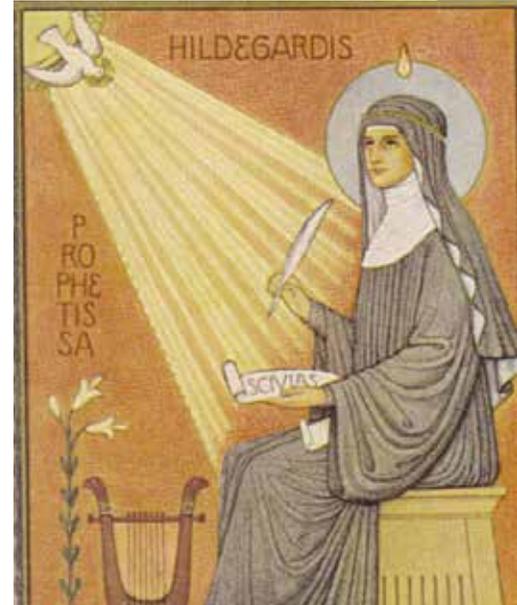
## LUMEN CHRISTI TAKES PROGRAMMING ONLINE

The Lumen Christi Institute successfully pivoted during the general lockdown brought on by COVID-19 and took its spring programming online, expanding its reach, increasing its audience, and developing its collaboration with similar institutes and universities across the nation.

As part of its core mission — and in normal times — the Lumen Christi Institute prioritizes the study and appreciation of the Catholic intellectual tradition within a local community of scholars at the University of Chicago. A chief part of this work happens with the weekly non-credit course on Biblical, historical, or topical themes, held at Gavin House and featuring invited speakers from the University of Chicago and schools nearby.

However, moving the course online in April also allowed the institute to invite prominent speakers from universities further afield. The students who would usually attend the non-credit course participated through the online platform, and we reached even wider audiences of faculty and the general public, including nearly 3,000 attendees and over 5,700 views of the event videos on YouTube.

*Read more about the online spring course, entitled “Reason and Wisdom in Medieval Christian Thought,” on pages 6 and 7.*



*Hildegard of Bingen was the subject of our April 30 webinar with Prof. Barbara Newman*



*Event panelists (clockwise from top left) Theresa Smart, Russell Hittinger, Stephen Schneck, Fr. Matt Malone, S.J.*

## CARDINAL FRANCIS GEORGE, LUMEN CHRISTI FOUNDER, HONORED WITH ONLINE EVENT

The Lumen Christi Institute honored its founder, Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., on the fifth anniversary of his death, April 17, with an online event titled, “Cardinal George, the American Contribution to Catholic Social Thought, and Our Current Moment.”

The three-person panel included Russell Hittinger, a senior fellow at the Lumen Christi Institute; Stephen Schneck, executive director of Franciscan Action Network; and Theresa Smart, an assistant professor in the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University.

Fr. Matt Malone, S.J., editor of America Magazine, moderated the discussion, which focused on Cardinal George’s writings on Catholic Social Thought and their applicability to the current public health crisis.

About 425 people participated in the livestream event, co-sponsored by America Magazine, the Saint Benedict Institute, the Nova Forum, the Collegium Institute, the Beatrice Institute, and Calvert House Catholic Center.

*Read more on page 3.*

2 DIRECTOR’S TRIBUTE TO JOHN LANGAN, S.J.

4 ECONOMIC COSTS OF THE PANDEMIC

5 INTERVIEW WITH FR. MICHAEL SWEENEY, O.P.

8 THE CHANGING FACE OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH

10 NEWMAN FORUM MEETS HIGH SCHOOLERS ONLINE

11 BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

## REMEMBERING FR. JOHN LANGAN, S.J., JESUIT & FRIEND



Fr. John Langan, S.J.  
(1940-2020)

A great contribution to the Lumen Christi Institute's growth has been the friendship of members of the Society of Jesus. This is not surprising, considering the historical contribution of Jesuits to the Catholic intellectual life and the special role that French Jesuit Cardinal Henri de Lubac, S.J. and those around him played in shaping the Second Vatican Council. Service on our Board by current Midwest Jesuit Provincial Fr. Brian Paulson, S.J., and Fr. Brian Daley, S.J., professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, has directly contributed to the fledgling institute's birth, development, and flourishing. When the Institute was little more than a successful lecture series and an idea, Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., agreed to serve on our Board of Advisers as well, writing to us, "I will even be willing to offer you my advice."

Although in a less public way, Fr. John Langan, S.J., who died on March 20, 2020, played a role in the life of the Institute, not only as a participant, but also as a friend, one with whom I shared three special bonds. We came to know Fr. John when he wrote a report on us for a European Catholic family foundation. Fr. John described his report as being very positive, citing both our deep devotion to the Catholic intellectual tradition, but also the charity that was manifestly at the center of our work. Both we and Fr. John shared the passionate devotion to the Catholic intellectual tradition held by our founder, Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., and the commitment to find common ground with fellow Catholics of our prior archbishop, with whom Fr. John worked and whose name Fr. John bore as the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Professor of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown.

Fr. John had a distinguished record of academic achievement and service to the Church. He had the good fortune to grow up in the Midwest and the even greater fortune of being a Detroit Tigers fan (Catholics are led to find solace in the midst of suffering). After attending the University of Detroit High School, he entered the Jesuits and later completed a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Michigan; this made him sympathetic with our work of making the Church's intellectual life present at lead-

ing secular universities. In addition to holding a faculty appointment at Georgetown University for 30 years, he taught at Loyola University in Chicago and at Yale Divinity School. He assisted the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in the preparation of a statement on capital punishment, the document "Economic Justice for All," and "The Gift of Peace." It's a measure of the breadth of the friendship in Christ of the Lumen Christi Institute that our former board chair, former Northwest Airlines CEO Steven G. Rothmeier, was a member of the Lay Commission on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy, organized to present an "alternative" view to that offered by the USCCB in "Economic Justice for All."

When the Institute held conferences with bishops, economists and other scholars on economic questions, Fr. John was a ready participant; this led to the deepening of our acquaintance into a real friendship. His presence was a sign that our work in the Catholic intellectual tradition could provide a common ground for Catholics of different perspectives. At a 2013 conference on the anniversary of John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, Fr. John spoke on "Sovereignty and Subsidiarity" on a panel with our then board member Jean Bethke Elshtain. Sadly, at a conference in 2015 at which Bishop Oscar Cantú offered the major address, Fr. John fell down a staircase in hotel lobby, breaking his shoulder. My trip with him in the ambulance to Northwestern Memorial Hospital, and my advocacy that evening for him, created a third bond to go with our mutual devotion to the Church's intellectual tradition and our most just love for the Detroit Tigers.

After that, we kept in close contact by phone and email and outlined ideas for a conference on the Just War tradition, on which he was a leading expert. We are developing a conference on this tradition, which we hope to offer in his honor. *Requiescat in pace* dear friend.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas Levergood".

-Thomas Levergood, Executive Director

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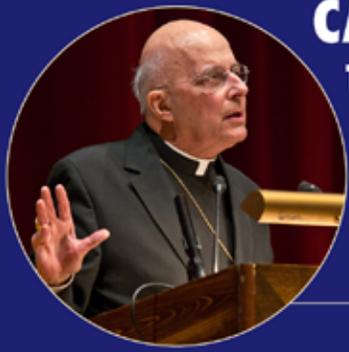
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## CARDINAL GEORGE, THE AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT, & OUR CURRENT MOMENT

Three scholars paid tribute to Cardinal Francis George, O.M.I., and his contribution to Catholic Social Thought on the fifth anniversary of his death, April 17, during an online Lumen Christi event.

Russell Hittinger, a visiting fellow on the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought, began the discussion saying the American contribution to Catholic Social Thought was slow to emerge, as there were few Catholics in the United States into the early 20th century. He identified Orestes Augustus Brownson (1803-1876), a layman and convert to Catholicism, as the first to make known in the United States the Catholic Social Thought that was developing in Europe.

Hittinger, who is also professor emeritus of Catholic studies and law at the University of Tulsa, compared Cardinal George with Archbishop John Ireland, who led the Archdiocese of St. Paul, Minneapolis, from 1888 to 1918. Both Midwestern prelates applied the social teachings of the popes of their day, paying special attention to issues of immigration and the environment. Both were also concerned about religious liberty, the "theology that animates" the great American institutions, and the impact of American individualism and pragmatism on the faith and the Church.

Stephen Schneck, former associate professor at The Catholic University of America and director of CUA's Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies, said Cardinal George, unlike "Catholic Americanizers," was always suspicious of the principles and practices of American thought as regards Catholic Social Teaching. The Catholic concept of freedom was very different for the cardinal from the concept of freedom promoted by the framers of the American constitution, said Schneck.

Cardinal George also promoted the Catholic idea of the

human person as being in relationship with others in a spirit of solidarity and the common good against the American caricature of the human person as independent. Steeped in Catholic anthropology, Cardinal George was very sensitive to these differences, he said.

Theresa Smart, an assistant professor in the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University, said she was "struck" by the "law, culture, and religion matrix" that Cardinal George constructed in his writings. She said he used the term "culture" as did John Paul II in his encyclical "Centesimus Annus" (1991), that is, as one of the key ways by which the Church and its members can engage and transform the world in Christ's image.

A fundamental principle in American society that dates to the founding of the republic is that the morality and religion of the people are "indispensable supports for the state," she said. The proper functioning of society with limited government relies on this morality, which the state cannot supply.

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However, Cardinal George would defend the role of religion in American society against the "American tendency" to "over-estimate natural virtue" and to make oneself into a spiritual authority, "rather than to obey external authorities or seek direction from representatives of the Church," Smart said.

"Cardinal George would agree that natural virtue alone is not sufficient to steer culture properly because, in the absence of grace, it can't generate the kind of interpersonal communion necessary for human society," she said.

Cardinal George also considered "the secular neutrality of the juridical order as a myth, and just as culture shapes law, law also shapes culture," she added. The cardinal's observations in this regard lead to an interesting conclusion for Catholics to take a more active role in the political sphere and to think more deeply about culture and the nature of the state, she said.

The panelists then took questions from the moderator, Fr. Matt Malone, S.J., and the audience.

**Go to [lumenchristi.org](http://lumenchristi.org) for a recording of the event.**

## CATHOLIC ECONOMISTS DISCUSS COSTS, BENEFITS TO COVID-19 LOCKDOWNS



*(Left to right): Jesus Fernandez-Villaverde, Joseph Kaboski, and Casey B. Mulligan*

Two Catholic economists weighed in on the policy response in the United States to COVID-19 during the Lumen Christi online event, “The Economic Costs of the Pandemic: Catholic Social Teaching and Economics in Dialogue,” on May 5.

Casey B. Mulligan, economics professor at the University of Chicago, and Jesus Fernandez-Villaverde, economics professor at the University of Pennsylvania, presented their analysis and engaged questions from the public. Joseph Kaboski, economics professor at the University of Notre Dame, moderated the discussion.

Both presenters agreed that an end to general lockdowns would respond to the needs of the more vulnerable members of society, namely the young and the poor, and would not contradict the preferential option for the poor articulated in Catholic Social Teaching.

Kaboski, who is president of the Catholic Research Economist Discussion Organization (CREDO) and a consultant to the USCCB Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, said the panel did not intend to suggest that a response to the pandemic should be decided only on economic grounds. However, he said, economics should have a voice since it is “very good” at understanding and identifying the tradeoffs involved in policy decisions and their implications for the economy, as well as for other aspects of life.

Mulligan, who is a member of CREDO’s advisory panel, presented his calculations of the market and non-market costs of the pandemic through May 4. He said the total economic cost of the lockdown in the United States, at \$28 billion daily, was “not equally shared” by all members of society, but affected mostly younger people and many people without college degrees.

“Figuring out ways to eliminate disease and treat disease is actually more valuable than the medical people really understand it to be, because its benefits go beyond just reducing the death count,” he said.

Fernandez-Villaverde expressed his concern for the millions of Americans under 40. He said a cost-benefit analysis of the lockdown policies shows many of the

benefits going to those over 60 and many of the costs going to those under 40, including missed educational and work opportunities, economic challenges in raising their families, and fewer financial resources.

“Any type of policy that is trying to save lives, as valuable as those are,” must consider harm to education and mental health, he said, noting the increase in suicides and domestic violence during the lockdown.

Despite the desire to be generous, the lack of resources that impose “serious limitations” on the relief that can be provided during times of crisis also requires economists and policymakers to evaluate tradeoffs, he said. He framed his assessment, especially as regards the generational inequalities he observed, as being guided by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

Mulligan suggested that government use individual incentives as a principle of regulation. People who are more vulnerable are aware of their vulnerability and are motivated to engage in self-protective behaviors. Regulation would simply facilitate and leverage those individual differences, he said.

In response to a question about the rise of “armchair epidemiologists,” Fernandez-Villaverde said the analysis of the clinical or therapeutic components of the virus are rightly left to medical experts. However, many epidemiological models are dynamic models, which economists are well-trained to interpret, analyze, estimate, and use to inform policymakers about how to create policies that are more sustainable and less burdensome on the economy, he said.

Mulligan agreed, underlining the application of economics onto epidemiological models in the past. He cited the studies of economists Richard A. Posner and Tomas J. Philipson on the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s and 90s. Economic models, which consider human incentives for self-protection, predicted a much lower AIDS infection rate than the epidemiological estimates, and Posner and Philipson turned out to be right, said Mulligan.

**Watch the video of the event at [lumenchristi.org](https://lumenchristi.org).**



## LUMEN CHRISTI PLAYS VITAL ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT OF LAY MISSION PROJECT

Lay ecclesial ministry is more the exception than the rule for lay Catholics, yet numerous theological degrees are geared to this end. In response, Fr. Michael Sweeney, O.P., founded the Lay Mission Project to offer formation

suitable to the needs of the majority of the laity, whose primary mission is not ecclesial ministry, but rather the transformation of secular society.

“What we can say in general about the lay mission in the Church is that it is to evangelize,” said Fr. Sweeney, the project’s executive director.

The Lay Mission Project is a collaboration of the Western Dominican Province and the Diocese of Sacramento. It recently graduated its first cohort; a second cohort is already in place. The program was also adopted in the Archdiocese of San Francisco and is available to be implemented in dioceses across the country.

The three-year program is offered through a combination of online and in-person sessions. The first two years focus on fundamental theology, including revelation, ecclesiology, Scripture, sacraments and Catholic Social Teaching.

While in Chicago for two events with the Lumen Christi Institute, Fr. Sweeney spoke about the vital role Lumen Christi played in the development of the Lay Mission Project. For instance, he drew heavily on several scholars who have collaborated closely with Lumen Christi, such as Russell Hittinger, Mary Hirschfeld and Sherri Brown, to be his program instructors.

“We love to work with Lumen Christi, and I see wonderful possibilities,” he said. “If we had a formed laity, then the conversation that is going on in the academy could actually happen in the pews as well. It’s systematic.”

He said the mission of the clergy and religious in the Church is clear in the Catholic imagination, but the same isn’t necessarily true for the mission of the laity.

“The Church has no imagination for lay agency,” he said, though he sees Lumen Christi as contributing to shaping a Catholic imagination in this regard.

“To shape a Catholic imagination requires a real in-depth investigation into the culture and this is sort of what Lumen Christi is doing, and I’m very grateful for it,” he said, adding that the conversations being held in the university are a “huge resource” that he hopes will eventually find their way into parishes.

“I deeply believe that we’re as good as our conversations,” he said. “And so, the conversation among lay Catholic scholars really can give birth to initiatives like this.”

While Fr. Sweeney does not see Lumen Christi “directly as an agent of formation of the laity,” he said the conversation that it fosters in the university does enable lay formation; it also affords a sense of community for Catholic scholars to know “they are not alone in the world.”

He lauded the Lumen Christi Institute for granting Catholic scholars across the country recognition and suitable forums in which to discuss their ideas. He called it “tragic” that the Catholic scholars at the numerous universities in the San Francisco Bay Area are called upon “almost not at all” by the local church to educate the faithful. He also said he was “very concerned” about the state of Catholic colleges in the country, which are either in danger of closing or of abandoning the liberal arts or other courses that are distinctly part of a Catholic education.

Therefore, to promote the Catholic intellectual tradition in the university today is “very important,” he said, referring to the mission of the Lumen Christi Institute, “and perhaps now more than ever because Catholic institutions don’t seem right now able to support that initiative.”

Fr. Sweeney’s presentation at the Lumen Christi Institute Feb. 27 offered insights from St. Dominic and the Order of Preachers on Church governance. His daylong master class Feb. 29 was on “Yves Congar’s ‘True and False Reform in the Church.’”

**Watch the video of his lecture at [lumenchristi.org](http://lumenchristi.org).**

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SPRING WEBINAR SERIES:

# Reason & Wisdom in Medieval Christian Thought

With the new measures and closure of the University, the Lumen Christi Institute took its spring non-credit course, entitled “Reason and Wisdom in Medieval Christian Thought,” online. The lecturers opened windows into the ways medieval Christian men and women sought to know God. The course highlighted a tension that runs through the tradition, between the contemplative and the more rational, dialectical methods, about how medieval Christians thought about knowing God, whom they could seek with their intellects but whom they also needed to know with the heart.

Midway through its run, the series had attracted many

viewers, with each livestream drawing about 200 people, and the institute received many notes of appreciation. Each formal presentation was accompanied by images and text. A moderated discussion then unfolded, during which attendees sent their questions to the presenter in real time. Read summaries of the first four presentations in the series below.

Lumen Christi will follow up the spring series with “Reason and Beauty in Renaissance Christian Thought and Culture,” a summer webinar series organized in collaboration with the American Cusanus Society.

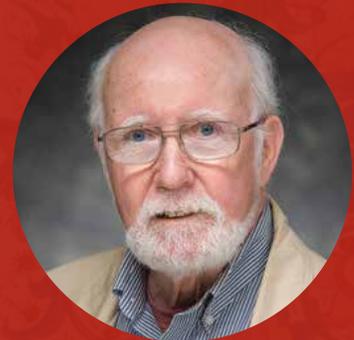
## BERNARD MCGINN ON Gregory the Great

Bernard McGinn, professor emeritus of the University of Chicago Divinity School, began the spring webinar series April 7 with the presentation, “Gregory the Great on Reading Scripture for Wisdom.”

The saintly pope, who led the people of Rome in prayerful procession for an end to a deadly plague in 590, also gave the Church his foundational theological writings, McGinn told the 220 people who participated in the livestream.

For Gregory, the contemplation of God is the primary call for every person in every state of life, McGinn explained. God created humans to contemplate him. However, the human capacity to contemplate God was destroyed in the Fall and made possible again in Christ.

McGinn laid out Gregory’s three steps required for contemplation: withdraw from the world, practice silence, and engage in “attentive regard for God.” For Gregory, “contemplation is never separate from action,” said McGinn. Instead, the active Christian life should lead to contemplation and vice versa.





## AARON CANTY ON *Anselm of Canterbury*

To meditate on the truths of the faith leads to joy, said Professor Aaron Canty of Saint Xavier University, citing St. Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033-1109), during the second session of Lumen Christi's Spring webinar series, April 16. The livestream of "The Rationality of Faith in Anselm" drew 185 people.

Canty explained how Anselm broke with the practices of the patristic tradition and initiated a method of exploring the faith through reasoned arguments, rather than through Scriptural arguments. Anselm's famous phrase from his "Prosologion" — "faith seeking understanding" — captures his method.

Canty discussed the relationship between faith and reason in light of three aspects of Anselm's thought: God's qualities, God's existence, and God's love and salvation wrought in Christ. Canty said Anselm's description of God as "greater than that which can be thought" is an attempt to demonstrate the limitations of human thought, rather than to prove God's existence.



## BRIAN CARL ON *Thomas Aquinas*

Brian Carl, assistant professor of philosophy at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, explored the relationship between nature, grace and faith in "Thomas Aquinas on Ways to Know God," with 240 people who participated in the third online lecture in Lumen Christi's spring webinar series, held April 23.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) taught that human beings are sojourners on the way to ultimate beatitude found in the vision of God, said Carl. Human beings can know God in their earthly life by grace and by faith. However, Aquinas maintained that they can also know God by reason, specifically philosophical wisdom.

Aquinas distinguishes between the mysteries of faith and the preambles of faith. The former are those truths known only through Divine Revelation, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation. The latter are truths that can be known with certainty by philosophical reasoning, but which are otherwise truths known by faith, such as God's existence and his attributes. Aquinas proposed that reason, though limited, still provides multiple possibilities to contemplate the mystery of God.



## BARBARA NEWMAN ON *Hildegard of Bingen*

Noted medievalist Barbara Newman, professor of English and religion at Northwestern University, led 450 participants through an introduction to the life, thought and legacy of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1169), April 30, the fourth lecture in Lumen Christi's spring webinar series.

Newman spoke of Hildegard's "theology of equilibrium." Just as balance in the body is important for physical health, the same is true for the life of virtue. She understood human virtue as a collaboration with God; virtues are not moral qualities but dynamic powers streaming down from God and interacting with human beings. Hildegard extended the need for equilibrium to all of nature and the cosmos.

Hildegard's writings are marked by prophetic visions, reproduced by artists that illuminate the manuscripts of her writings. She composed 75 liturgical chants and a full-scale musical drama, "Ordo Virtutum." Her works are regularly performed by early music ensembles today.



## LATINO REALITY OFFERS BLESSINGS, NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR U.S. CHURCH

If history books can speak of German, Irish or Italian waves of Catholic immigration, then the Latino influx into the Catholic Church in America would be “a tsunami,” said Hosffman Ospino, professor of theology at Boston College.

The Lumen Christi Institute hosted Ospino for a public lecture at the University of Chicago March 5. Ospino began his presentation on the theme, “American Catholic Contours and Detours in a Fifty Percent Hispanic/Latino Church,” by situating this new large-scale Latino reality within the longer history of the Church in America.

Traditionally, the heartbeat of Catholicism in the Northeast and Midwest and was energized by European immigration. These regions were crucial in forming Catholic identity in the United States, he said. Sees like Boston, New York, Chicago, and St. Louis embodied clearly defined ways of being the church, mostly from a Euro-American Catholic perspective. These immigrant groups came to America to stay and wished to integrate into larger society. They built schools and other Catholic institutions, got involved in the labor force and politics, engaged in intellectual life, and supplied vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

While this process gave Catholics a large footprint in the United States, Ospino argued that it has not been without its consequences. For many decades, American Catholics assumed that being “American” and “Catholic” was dichotomous. As a result, they shed many ethno-religious ways of being church and accepted the majority Protestant mentality.

Ospino then turned to the Latino reality and asked whether this long-standing way of being church in America could allow the emerging majority of Latino Catholics to flourish. Speaking of the challenges, he noted the lack of Latino presence in Church leadership across the country at all levels. Vocations are few compared with earlier Catholic immigrant groups, and few American Latino priests are pastors, much less chancery workers, and consequently, do not have an opportunity to exercise significant leadership.

Additionally, he lamented the lack of integration of Latino Catholics in the Catholic landscape, especially in the historic Midwest and Northeast. While they have reanimated



parishes that were on the brink of closure or merger, the notion of the “Hispanic parish” continues to represent the inability to incorporate the Latino reality into the wider local Church. About 4,500 parishes in the United States, representing 25 percent of parishes nationwide, serve Spanish-speaking faithful. However, the Latino reality is not simply an immigrant one, he clarified. Two-thirds of Latino Catholics were born in the United States.

Ospino described this moment in American Catholicism as “prophetic” and challenged greater involvement of the Latino community in the American Church.

He suggested priestly and religious vocations among Latino Catholics could be nurtured by providing more educational opportunities to a population that is proportionally less educated, and he advocated for a more synodal way of being the church.

He said the American Church can gain from the new Latino reality if it can be seen as a rebirth of the Church in the United States and “a fresher way of being church.” He was clear in communicating that the Latino reality is not “a problem” for the Church to solve. Rather, it is a blessing that offers four opportunities that could renew the American Catholic Church in the 21st century, he said.

“First, we must embrace the new spaces,” he said. He argued that the lines that delineate Catholic presence in the United States have been redrawn and American Catholics need to look past the Northeast and Midwest regions as the guideposts for Catholic life. The Southwest has emerged as a new area of growth and must also be considered in defining what it means to be Catholic in the United States.

Second, American Catholics must be prepared to ask and answer new questions about the needs of this renewed Church: How do we embrace a Church that is poorer and

has fewer resources? How do we educate its youth and improve their access to education? How do we wrestle with the ongoing issue of undocumented immigrants? How do we combat a certain anti-intellectualism in the Latino community?

Third, Catholics must be prepared to hear new voices in theological discourse, particularly from a new generation of Latino theologians.

Fourth, in an effort to construct a new and inclusive American Catholic identity, Catholics need to look to Latino youth — more than half of whom are under the age of 29 — as the bridge-builders between the Latino reality and historical American Catholicism, which can create a new way of being American Catholic with “Hispanic flavor,” he said.

Watch the video of the event at [lumenchristi.org](http://lumenchristi.org).

## EXORCIST SPEAKS OF FREE WILL AND DANGERS OF ENGAGING WITH EVIL

Evil is not merely the absence of something good, but an “active force, a living spiritual being that is perverted and that perverts others,” said Msgr. Jeffrey S. Grob, citing Pope Paul VI, who spoke these words at a General Audience in 1972.

The Lumen Christi Institute sponsored an online dialogue on “The Nature of Evil: Satan, Hell, and the Rite of Exorcism in the Catholic Church” with Msgr. Grob, the judicial vicar and expert in the Rite of Exorcism for the Archdiocese of Chicago, in early March. The event was organized by Catholics at Booth, a student club at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

To understand evil as “a living spiritual being,” that is, the devil, is part of the tradition of the Church, Msgr. Grob said.

“It’s not just an amorphous force floating around somewhere out there,” he said.

He noted two dominant positions in the culture as regards the devil — and they are at opposite extremes. The first is that the devil is a creation of the human imagination and does not really exist; the second is that the devil is real and lurks everywhere, constantly drawing people into sin.

He said tendency of those in the second camp “to blame all evil and bad choices on the devil” is counter to the Church’s teaching that God created all people with free will “to choose God or to choose something else.”

To blame all evil on the devil would mean people would “lose that sense of personal responsibility,” he said.

Most of the time, one’s movement toward sinfulness is the result of one’s own choices, he added. However, he said, “there are times when the darkness tries to engage us.” In those times, it is important to differentiate what is of the Evil One and what is not, and to call on God, the Mother

of God, and the saints for help.

He spoke of Pope Francis’ teachings about evil and the devil, in particular in his apostolic exhortation “Gaudete et Exsultate.” Christians “should not think of the devil as a myth, a representation, a symbol, a figure of speech or an idea,” the pope wrote, but rather should exercise vigilance against evil.

The monsignor said it is never right or appropriate for someone to negotiate with or to engage the devil, though some people make the choice to do so. However, the Church is present to minister to those who make this choice and to deliver them from this bondage.

Msgr. Grob said Pope John Paul II urged every diocese to have an exorcist and a process to assist people who may have opened themselves up to the workings of the devil, including through the occult.

Exorcists are trained as skeptics and follow a clearly defined procedure to discern whether a person needs the Rite of Exorcism. In many cases, a person would need only a healing prayer or the sacraments to address the disturbance they are experiencing. In some cases, people need a prayer of deliverance. In other cases, a priest would need to perform the Rite of Exorcism.

This process is not a “sensationalist, side-show event,” he said. It is accompanying and assisting a person in their return to the fullness of life in the Body of Christ, the Church, he clarified.

Msgr. Grob said the most difficult part of his ministry of exorcism is seeing “the suffering people endure” because they did not realize the evil they were engaging, either due to a lack of understanding of their faith or a desensitization to the consequence of occult practices. The best part of his ministry, he said, is “bringing people restoration and back in right relationship with Jesus.”



## NEWMAN FORUM OFFERS INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS STUCK AT HOME

The COVID-19 lockdown presented the right opportunity for Lumen Christi's Newman Forum for high school students to launch into a series of online programming, which it had been considering for some time. Through March, April, and May, the Newman Forum ran webinars every other Thursday.

The first curriculum was an online version of an event, held at St. John Cantius Parish in January, "How NOT to Get Away with Murder," a close reading of Genesis 3 and 4. The close-reading, seminar-style format of the event lent itself well to the online Zoom platform that was used. The teens had a Bible handy and the Newman Forum team, Austin Walker and Madison Chastain, alternated reading passages aloud. They guided students in noticing the underlying patterns in the text and probed students for analysis of their own. The discussion developed and soon students were charting their own understanding of the relevance of Genesis.

The second session was titled, "Answering Your Atheist Philosophy Professor." Students were assigned a common text to read — a 2019 opinion piece in the New York Times by a philosophy professor who claims that God is an incoherent concept. Then, during the online session, Austin and Madison led students in a close reading and analysis of the most pertinent arguments related to the text. The goal of the session was to show students how, without the use of specifically religious concepts and using the philosopher's own philosophical terms, arguments against the existence of God are easily toppled

— no college degree required.

The third teen webinar, held April 30, was based on the teens' majority interest in Christian fiction. It focused on Tolkien's lesser-known story, "Leaf by Niggle." After explaining the terms "literal" and "allegorical," Austin and Madison walked the teens through the literal translation of the first half of the story and worked through the story's many allegories and allusions. At the most pivotal point of the narrative, when the allegory becomes so thick that it is difficult to ascertain what is happening to the protagonist, Niggle, the teens applied the tools they had gained to discern the true meaning of the text.

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**The discussion developed and soon students were charting their own understanding of the relevance of Genesis.**

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The three curricula developed are easily repeatable and recurring sessions will be held into the foreseeable future. Staff intends to amend and expand the curriculum for parents, youth ministers, and other interested adults. In the meantime, teachers, youth ministers, and others have been invited to sit in on the programs and to discuss pedagogy and online strategy afterward.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak and after a number of successful in-person conferences at the University of Chicago, the Newman Forum had begun developing smaller events to take on the road. The plan was to develop a collection of rotating curricula for smaller groups of teens in partnership with parishes and schools. The Newman Forum intends to return to developing this programming once social distancing measures and other restrictions are loosened.

# BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

## *Alietia Caughron*

*“There is richness and joy in the Catholic intellectual tradition, and the institute embraces that wholeheartedly and brings it to others.”*



Alietia Caughron struck up a conversation with a woman seated next to her on a recent flight. Her fellow traveler, she learned, was a religious studies professor at a secular university in Florida. Caughron thought it might be a long shot, but decided to ask anyway: “Have you heard of the Lumen Christi Institute?”

“Of course. It’s the best,” the professor said, going on to convey her appreciation and respect for the work of the institute.

Caughron, a Lumen Christi board member since 2019, said she regularly hears expressions of gratitude and high regard from an array of people for the institute’s commitment to promoting the Catholic intellectual tradition through its programming on the University of Chicago campus, in downtown venues, and now online.

A native of Kansas City, Missouri, Caughron moved to Chicago from Boston to pursue her career in 2012. She is currently a managing director of financial risk and enterprise risk management at TIAA, a Fortune 100 financial services organization that serves academics, researchers, and other professionals in the nonprofit sector.

As a longtime benefactor of Catholic education, Caughron is currently on the board of Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, and a member of the Chicago Board of Regents for her alma mater Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula, California, where she earned her bachelor’s degree in liberal arts. She earned both her master’s degree and doctoral degree in mathematics from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, where she received a Distinguished Dissertation Fellowship. Upon earning her doctorate, she began a career in the financial services industry, working at GE Insurance, Swiss Re, Homesite Insurance Group, and CNA Financial. Caughron is also a Dame of Malta and a

founding member of the Downtown Chicago Chapter of Legatus.

Caughron had learned about Lumen Christi prior to her move to Chicago through the institute’s communications. Living in Chicago allowed her finally to attend its public events, which she said are “always outstanding, informational, and very impressive.”

“There is richness and joy in the Catholic intellectual tradition, and the institute embraces that wholeheartedly and brings it to others,” she said. She later took part in a Lumen Christi Great Books Seminar, which allowed her to get to know the institute and its staff. Eventually, she was invited to join the board.

“I believe in the mission of the institute,” she said. “It’s now expanding, but it began by educating those who would be teaching at universities and colleges.... If you want to support evangelization in today’s world, at the heart of evangelization is the formation of those who will form others.”

The institute’s teen program, the Newman Forum, is among the more recent initiatives that Caughron appreciates as “smart and very thoughtful.”

“It’s an opportunity to reach young people and to engage with them before they’ve even gone to university. It gives them a chance to see a point of view that they may not even see when they get to college,” she said.

Lumen Christi donors support formation and evangelization; they believe that the Catholic intellectual tradition “needs to have a seat at the table” and can effectively engage in the public forum, she said. She wished to encourage those who also share these interests to spend time learning about the Lumen Christi Institute and to support it as well.



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## WHAT WILL BE YOUR LEGACY?

As you reflect on ways that you can make a lasting impact in the Catholic Church, please consider including the Lumen Christi Institute in your estate plans. Planned gifts, such as leaving a bequest to Lumen Christi in your will, allow us to continue our mission of promoting Catholic intellectual life.

Gifts made through your will or trust can be restricted to funding a position or program or unrestricted, so that they are allocated to the area of greatest need.

**Special naming opportunities are available for gifts that exceed \$25,000.**

Friends of the Lumen Christi Institute who choose planned giving are inducted into our St. Augustine Circle, where special benefits include:

- Customized engagement opportunities related to their interests.
- Annual personal briefing from the executive director.
- Free admission, reserved priority seating, and recognition at Lumen Christi events.
- The opportunity to host a speaker for a private lunch or dinner.
- Opportunities to attend private luncheons and dinners with visiting scholars.

Before making any changes to your estate plans, please consult your financial adviser. For more information on our planned giving program, please contact Julie Ryan at (773) 955-5887 or [julie.ryan@lumenchristi.org](mailto:julie.ryan@lumenchristi.org).



THE BEACON

LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE

SUMMER 2020

*(Top): On Feb. 29, Fr. Michael Sweeney, O.P., leads a master class for students on Yves Congar, the French Dominican theologian who greatly influenced the Second Vatican Council; (Below): an audience member asks a question at the March 5 lecture by Hosffman Ospino.*