



THE BEACON

NEWSLETTER OF THE LUMEN CHRISTI INSTITUTE FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT

SPRING 2021

LCI PARTNERS WITH BOLLANDIST SOCIETY

Why would a 400-year-old organization like the Bollandist Society wish to partner with a 25-year-old organization like Lumen Christi? For Irini de Saint Sernin, the Bollandists' development officer, perhaps the question is better answered in reverse. Established in the 17th century by Flemish Jesuits, the Bollandist Society has long undertaken the worthy task of hagiography, balancing scholarly rigor in the assessment of historical sources alongside a humble appreciation of the depth of spiritual wisdom and divine intercession that these figures embodied. The Lumen Christi Institute looks forward to a fruitful partnership with the Bollandist Society — an engagement that has already resulted in insightful lectures on the lives of Sts. Louise de Marillac, Vincent de Paul, Edward Campion and the martyrs of England and Wales, as well as on the veneration of the saints and relics.

Read our interview with Irini de Saint Sernin on page 8.



*A copper engraving of the Holy Brothers of Benevento.
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STUDENTS DISCUSS AIMS OF EDUCATION AND THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL LIFE

This past fall, the Lumen Christi Institute and Calvert House piloted an event with the hope of it becoming annual: a discussion with students on the aims of education from a Catholic perspective. In an online panel discussion on Dec. 9, Fr. Andrew Liaugminas, Calvert House chaplain, reflected on the university's motto, "crescat scientia, vita excolatur." Jennifer Martin, professor at the University of Notre Dame, discussed education as a way of life. Andrew Horne of the Lumen Christi Institute spoke of how education elevates a person's perspective beyond immediate-term goals. Lively discussion followed.

Read our director's reflections on this topic on page 2.



Clockwise from top left: Jennifer Newsome Martin, Andrew Horne, Fr. Andrew Liaugminas and Thomas Levergood discuss the Catholic intellectual life.

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LIBERAL EDUCATION AND THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

At the beginning of my undergraduate studies at the University of Chicago, an issue of the University of Chicago Magazine was devoted to a series of brief biographical portraits of the university presidents. This was a blessing.

It's easy to be a student and even a faculty member with only a superficial understanding of the roles of figures central to the story of the University of Chicago, such as founding President William Rainey Harper, pragmatist philosophers, such as John Dewey or George Herbert Mead — about whom our founder, Cardinal Francis George, wrote his doctoral dissertation — or the greatest of the university's presidents, Robert Maynard Hutchins.

Hutchins presided over the development of the core curriculum, eliminated football and consulted no faculty or members of the board of trustees when he agreed to the federal government's request that the university be the site of the Manhattan Project to develop the nuclear bomb.

As a student, I would often try to eat lunch at the table beneath Hutchins' portrait in Hutchinson Commons.

Later, when I was founding the Lumen Christi Institute at his beloved university, I was conscious of taking up the challenge he gave in a speech to educators of Catholic colleges and universities to make what he called "the longest intellectual tradition of any institution in the contemporary world" come alive in American intellectual circles.

Hutchins himself in the 1930s had set the University of Chicago against pragmatist philosophy and revised the curriculum around the

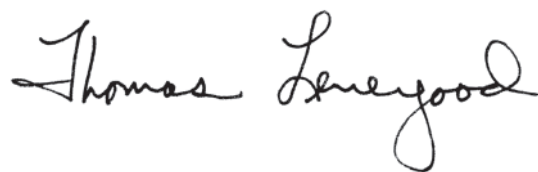
classics of Western civilization, attracting Mortimer Adler to lead the project. Adler, in turn, was influenced by the core Western civilization sequence developed at Columbia University, by poet Mark Van Doren.

Much of what is best in American liberal arts education — even at Catholic colleges — can be traced to the influence of Columbia or Chicago. The alternative is the Harvard University model of distribution requirements. You can get an education at Harvard, provided you know what an education is. The University of Chicago will teach you something about what an education is. As Catholics, we need to follow Hutchins and complete his project by making the Catholic intellectual tradition a living reality.

There is an urgent need to rethink higher education in the United States. Amid pressures of specialization, bureaucratization and professionalization, the historic mission of the university as a community of scholars forming students in an intellectual culture and tradition has been displaced.

Thus we return to look anew at questions that have been raised and debated over the past century by Hutchins and men like him: What is the purpose of a university? What is the purpose of a liberal education? Are these the same or different questions? How does the transformation of culture in the last half-century change the nature of the debate? What do the Christian and Catholic traditions offer as a perspective?

The Lumen Christi Institute will organize a series of events in 2021 through its Forum on the Church in Higher Education to address these questions.



LUMEN CHRISTI ASSISTS IN ESTABLISHING THE HARVARD CATHOLIC FORUM



The idea for the newly minted Harvard Catholic Forum began on an ordinary summer day in 2019, when Deacon Tim O'Donnell and his wife, Elke, a theologian, sat down for breakfast.

"You know, I found the Lumen Christi website last night," Elke told her husband, who had joined the pastoral staff at the Harvard Catholic Center and the adjoining St. Paul Parish a few months earlier. The fateful question followed: "Why aren't we doing something like that at Harvard?"

So, the deacon pitched the idea to an internal group at St. Paul's, and it was greeted with enthusiasm.

"Next, the graduate chaplain, the director of advancement and I got on the phone with Thomas Levergood, and the first thing he said was, 'I want to help you in any way I can,'" the deacon recalled.

As the founding executive director of the Lumen Christi Institute, Levergood shared his experience of getting Lumen Christi off the ground, the help he received, the challenges he faced, and how he overcame them.

"He's given a lot of background and advice," the deacon said. "He has just been enormously generous."

After a series of online meetings, the Harvard Catholic Forum was born as a project of both the parish and the Harvard Catholic Center. Deacon O'Donnell, ordained for the Archdiocese of Boston in 2011, was appointed the program director.

"The forum took shape out of something that seemed good for the whole community," he added.

The first semester of programming — mostly webinars, due to COVID-19 — launched in September 2020. In support of the forum, Lumen Christi co-presented public webinars, took the lead on promotions and provided key logistical support.

The webinars included a series on faith and science and another on sacred art. A third series on Catholic social teaching is being planned for next year. Programming that involves university faculty and that is pertinent to the university's renowned medical, business and law schools will be developed, along with a program on sacred music.

This first year of programming included two non-credit courses in New Testament

Greek and Latin. Three other webinars considered the impact of COVID-19 on the church worldwide, humanism as an educational idea, and what to make of miracles.

"The response has been excellent," said Deacon O'Donnell of the programming to date.

Between 250 and 400 people attended each event. All of the webinars were open to the public.

O'Donnell said the Harvard Catholic Forum is unique in the Boston area, home to several top universities, as an organization focused exclusively on "intellectual and cultural engagement" from the perspective of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

"The forum is really a place to which everyone is invited," he said. "You don't have to be a Catholic to come."

Deacon O'Donnell said he appreciates Levergood's willingness and success in helping to start other institutes, modeled on Lumen Christi's mission of promoting the Catholic intellectual tradition, all the while recognizing that each one is different.

Levergood is not intent on establishing multiple Lumen Christi Institutes, Deacon O'Donnell said. Instead, he coordinates regional programs "and encourages people in different places to develop their talents and adapt to their situation," the deacon added.

"The Catholic intellectual and cultural tradition has so much to offer the world and the academic disciplines in terms of perspective of vision, of the human person in total, of the world as our home," said the deacon, reflecting on the importance of sharing the Catholic intellectual tradition in this moment in history.

"We have an aggressively secular intellectual culture," the deacon continued. "We have a lot of prejudice among intellectuals and people in the cultural sphere about whether the Catholic Church is an enemy to both God and culture — which it certainly is not. But I think we need to keep on reminding people that it's not."

THEOLOGIAN'S ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER A RESPONSE TO THE HUMAN NEED FOR THE MYSTICAL

On the day before the publication of his ninth and final volume on the history of mystical theology in Christianity, Bernard McGinn was discussing plans for his next writing project — a brief, more popular book on 19th- and 20th-century mystics.

At 84, the native New Yorker and renowned professor emeritus of the University of Chicago Divinity School said his series would need a few more volumes to complete the history of mystical theology, from 1700 to the present, but he believes this work is best left for others to do.

“I just don’t have the time to write another two or three major volumes on that,” he said.

McGinn’s first volume of the nine, “The Foundations of Mysticism,” was published in 1991. The entire series covers the classic period, from the early church to 1700, and numbers more than 5,000 pages.

His prolific writings, as well as the precision and thoroughness in his research and analysis, have made McGinn the most well-known and well-respected scholar of Western mysticism today. The Catholic theologian has been most-readily associated with the revival of mystical theology in the past 50 years.

Mystical theology had gone dormant in Catholic theological circles since the Quietest condemnations of the late 17th century — the topic of his final book in the series, “The Crisis of Mysticism: Quietism in Seventeenth-Century Spain, Italy, and France” (Herder & Herder, 2021). The Lumen Christi Institute is planning a public event on “The Crisis of Mysticism” in May (see page 5 for details).

Quietism encouraged private, personal prayer and contemplation, aimed at union with God and a personal transformation in God, through a quieting of the mind and openness to God’s action.

“In the 17th century, there was a growing fear of interior prayer, particularly interior prayer that would overwhelm one’s practical life in the Christian domain,” McGinn explained.

“Some institutional leaders, not all, were very suspicious that too much stress on interior prayer, especially a prayer of quiet, a prayer in which you emptied yourself of all thoughts and practices, was dangerous to the ordinary life of the Christian, the life of devotion, of sacramental practice and even, sometimes, of your attitude toward the institutional church or even towards the proper observance of the commandments,” he said.

“So, it was a crisis, at least for Catholic mysticism, which was pushed to the margins and denigrated for a long time,” he said. “Mysticism in Catholicism was basically moribund — it was dead — for the next almost 200 years.”

However, a fervent interest in spirituality and a revival of mysticism emerged in the 1960s as a general cultural phenomenon, he said. McGinn had also noticed this keen interest in mysticism in his students at the University of Chicago Divinity School, where he began teaching in 1969.

After the Second Vatican Council, prominent Protestant Divinity Schools across the country saw an increase in Catholic students and decided to recruit Catholic professors. McGinn and Fr. David Tracy, both teaching at The Catholic University of America at the time, were among those recruited by the University of Chicago.

“This is part of the vocation of Christian baptism, that you are called to an increasingly deeper sense of God’s presence in your life, which is all that mysticism is.”

McGinn was hired to teach medieval and patristic theology primarily. However, his students’ profound interest in the mystical theology and literature he had introduced in his classes afforded him the opportunity to delve into this field, which was equally fascinating for him, and to make it a main professional focus.

“The growth of spirituality, meditation practices, contemplative prayer was remarkable,” McGinn recalled of the 1960s and 1970s.

“I think the revival of mysticism was also an attempt to correct the balance against

an institution, the church, that was no longer feeding the mystical dimension of believers, but insisting upon a rigid institutional approach or an overly intellectual approach,” he said.

Today, the church is not as threatened by mysticism as it once was, said McGinn. He describes the 1960s revival of mysticism as “a movement of the Holy Spirit, which alerted most church leaders” to the importance of this dimension

of the human person that needs to be nourished.

Despite the wider interest in such prayer, McGinn said he has spent much of his career “trying to overcome the error” that to be mystical is to have visions.

“All the great mystics have insisted that the essence of mystical consciousness or contemplation is greater love of God and greater love of neighbor and...of an immediate sense of God’s presence,” he explained. “This is part of the vocation of Christian baptism, that you are called to an increasingly deeper sense of God’s presence in your life, which is all that mysticism is.

“It’s not gifts or visions or stigmata or special kinds of things whatsoever,” he said.

To be a mystic simply requires devoting time to some form of contemplative prayer, to silence and openness to God — a practice he keeps faithfully as well, he said.

McGinn’s contributions to mystical theology extend beyond his nine volumes on the history of Christian mystical theology. He contributed to the publication of the 18-volume Encyclopedia of World Spirituality. He also served on the original editorial board for the well-known series, by Paulist Press, “Classics of Western Spirituality.” He was the series’ general editor for 25 years, from 1988 to 2015. The first volume — there are now 135 — was published in 1978. Millions of books in this series have sold, he said.

“It was a need of the times,” he added. “People were out there waiting for that material.”

McGinn retired from the University of Chicago in 2003, but has continued his association with the Divinity School and the Lumen Christi Institute at the university. McGinn recalled when the idea of starting a Catholic Studies program was bounced around at the University of Chicago. He was against it and proposed instead “some kind of institute, some kind of program, which could bring Catholic scholars to the university and make courses available.”



McGinn at a Lumen Christi event in 2012

McGinn rejected the suggestion that the Lumen Christi Institute was his idea. Other scholars at the university had voiced the same preference, he said, adding his appreciation for all of the “heavy lifting” done by the institute’s current executive director, Thomas Levergood, and others in establishing Lumen Christi, and their ongoing work.

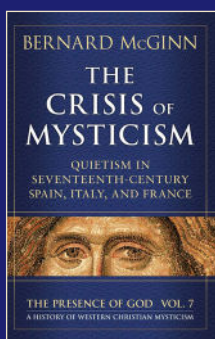
“I think he’s been extraordinarily successful,” McGinn said of Levergood’s work. “The institute has enriched the intellectual discourse at the university. At the same time, it’s shown the secular university the importance of the Catholic intellectual and spiritual traditions.”

McGinn said he has been very pleased with his association with Lumen Christi, which still includes about two lectures per year.

“It gave me the opportunity to reach an audience that I might not have had, a broader audience from a number of different kinds of areas in the university and even outside the university,” he said.

Though retired from full-time teaching and from writing his historical series, McGinn’s work with the Christian mystics is not done, as he prepares to write his next book on the modern mystics for a wider readership.

“It’s one of the things that keeps me going, continuing to read these wonderful figures and their insights,” he said.



Join us for an online discussion of
**The Crisis of Mysticism: Quietism
in Seventeenth-Century Spain, Italy, and France**
THURSDAY, MAY 6, 7:00 P.M. CT

with Bernard McGinn, Fr. David Tracy (University of Chicago),
Sr. Sandra Schneiders, IHM (Santa Clara University), & Willemien Otten
(University of Chicago). Visit www.lumenchristi.org/mysticism for details.

HISPANIC THEOLOGY SERIES EVENTS

APRIL 13

Hosffman Ospino on
**Teaching Catholic Doctrine
en Español**

APRIL 20

David Lantigua on
**Globalization from Below:
“Fratelli Tutti” and the Latino
Social Teaching of Pope Francis**

APRIL 27

Miguel Romero on
**Was Something Lost? Thomas
Aquinas, Intellectual Disability,
and the 16th-century Spanish
Colonial Debates**

MAY 4

Claudia Herrera on
Latino Youth and Evangelization

MAY 11

Michelle Gonzalez Maldonado,
Juan Soto, & Peter Casarella on
**Beauty and Justice in the City:
The Restoration of St. Adalbert’s
Parish in Pilsen**

MAY 18

Roberto Goizueta and
Neomi de Anda on
Latino Christology

MAY 25

Victor Carmona and
Nichole Flores on
The Ethics of Immigration

JUNE 1

Socorro Castañeda-Liles on
**Our Lady of *Café con Leche*:
The Catholic Imagination of
Mexican Women in America**

SPRING THEOLOGY SERIES TO FOCUS ON LARGEST DEMOGRAPHIC IN THE CHURCH

The Lumen Christi Institute’s upcoming Hispanic Theology Series, featuring top Latino/a scholars and focused on sharing the richness and depth of Latino Catholic communities, is sponsored by a recent grant of \$16,350 from Our Sunday Visitor Institute.

The series, set to relaunch this spring, has two goals. The first is to reach out to young theologians and ministry leaders, who are working to create bridges in the church, and to make the insights of the Catholic intellectual tradition more available to them. The second is to transmit the Latino Catholic community’s theological and spiritual insights to the broader church.

In recent decades, the Catholic Church in the United States has seen considerable demographic shifts. Today, almost 50 percent of Catholics in the United States are Latino and most of the growth of the Catholic Church in the United States is among the Latino communities. While growth is positive, these shifts also pose several evangelical and ministerial challenges, as the church must find ways to work through cultural and linguistic divides, to bring its laity together, and to find effective paths for bicultural evangelization.

The Lumen Christi Institute is mindful that the centerpiece of its mission — the Catholic intellectual tradition — is a shared, living heritage of the whole church, and can contribute to these objectives.

The Hispanic Theology Series first launched in April 2019, with a lecture on St. Oscar Romero, by Dr. Michel Lee of Fordham University. Six months later, Professor Carlos Eire of Yale University spoke on St. Teresa of Avila and his personal memoir. Hosffman Ospino of Boston College presented on the changing demographics of the Catholic Church in the United States in March 2020. The latter two professors gave public lectures at the University of Chicago, master classes for undergraduate and graduate students, and workshops for lay leaders. More than 300 people attended these events.

After a successful start, and a short interruption due to the pandemic, the series will continue its programming online in spring 2021. The lectures, panel discussions and interactive workshops (listed in the calendar of events at left), will survey contributions to the Catholic intellectual tradition by Latino/a scholars. The topics will range from Latino Christology, to a Latino theology of disability, and the quotidian devotion of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Direct all inquiries about the series to Michael Le Chevallier, associate director of the Lumen Christi Institute.



NEW NETWORK PROMOTES CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Bipartisan awareness of the need to reform the United States criminal justice system is growing, and the Lumen Christi Institute is set to make a significant contribution to the discussion.

This past winter the institute launched the Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network (CCJRN), with the goal of introducing Catholic tradition and social teaching into the conversations being held on the creation of a more just and effective criminal justice system.

While efforts exist to address specific issues, such as the death penalty, the new network will fill a gap in the U.S. criminal justice landscape as the only interdisciplinary network addressing comprehensive reform from a Catholic perspective.

It will provide an ongoing forum for collaboration among scholars, attorneys, clergy and others who wish to integrate Catholic thought into their criminal justice work. It will assist members with incorporating the Catholic worldview in their teaching of law students and undergraduates, as well as attorneys in introducing Catholic thought into their practices and firms.

The network's programming will be open to students and young professionals. A number of virtual and in-person CCJRN events are planned over the next year, including a public event at Seattle University in the fall and a major colloquium in Washington D.C. in spring 2022.

The network was established as the result of a series of conversations between Thomas Levergood, Lumen Christi's executive director, and Cook County Judge Thomas More Donnelly, who served for 13 years as a public defender in Chicago.

"Defending poor people accused of crimes was a channel of grace for me," said Donnelly. "I saw Christ in each and

every one of them. I hope that a few saw Christ in me."

Donnelly said he hopes the new network will encourage Catholics to consider how to ground criminal justice in human dignity.

Donnelly's vision is shared by the network's executive committee, whose members include Tanya Woods, executive director of the Westside Justice Center, Notre Dame Law School Professor Marah McLeod and Michael O'Rourke, director of the Office of Domestic Social Development at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, among others.

This vision is accompanied by the conviction that a Catholic approach — which draws on a 2,000-year-old tradition that affirms the need for justice, mercy, solidarity and individual responsibility, and is imbued with an understanding of the common good — can transcend partisan divisions.

Catholic tradition, which affirms the need for justice and mercy, solidarity and individual responsibility, and is imbued with an understanding of the common good, can transcend partisan divisions.

Cosponsors of the initiative include: Georgetown University Law Center, Notre Dame Law School, Boston College Law School, the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago, the Catholic Prison Ministry Coalition, Loyola University Chicago School of Law and Seattle University.

On March 4, the network kicked off its programming with an online event on the book, "Conversion and the Rehabilitation of the Penal System" (Oxford University Press, 2019). The next virtual event, April 8, will feature Judge Stephanos Bibas

of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and William Pizzi, (University of Colorado Law School). They will discuss Pizzi's recent book, "The Supreme Court's Role in Mass Incarceration" (Routledge, 2020).

Learn more about the initiative, sponsors & programming at www.lumenchristi.org/criminal-justice.



INTERVIEW WITH IRINI DE SAINT SERVIN *of the Bollandist Society*

Image copyright Jacques de Selliers

The Lumen Christi Institute and the Bollandist Society are pleased to have established a partnership that will promote greater knowledge about the cult of the saints in the Catholic tradition, as well as the witness of the saints for our time. In the following interview, Irini de Saint Sernin, development officer for the Bollandist Society, shares her reflections on the impact of the saints for the world today.

What is the importance of the saints to our world today?

They give us the real heroes that we're really looking for. There's still an appetite for heroes in our world. We see it in the rapid ascendancy of some of today's stars whom the youngsters adore in the Instagram civilization. When it comes to the saints, we have to remember that when we talk about them we go back to the second century onwards. So we have a nearly 2000-year-old history in which we encounter, somehow, the very best superstars and superheroes. What is special about the saints is that their activity does not end when they die. When they go to heaven, somehow they are still with us. That's actually when all of their activity starts even more. So we need them because somehow they prove that to follow the message of the gospel is possible for normal people like you and me. And they still have an ear close to our needs, how they intercede for our needs. Unfortunately most people only see them as great intercessors rather than as examples to be emulated.

What can people learn from the lives of the saints — especially those saints that are “minor” or lesser known?

First of all, what is a minor saint? What is a big saint? I suppose there's not enough space in the universal calendar to celebrate everyone, that's why there's the Roman martyrology where they only record the names of those who can be used as a universal example, and then the more local ones are left to the local churches to do so. I think what is important to understand is the locality of the saint — the saint is a local hero. He or she means something to his community — a community is very proud to have a saint. I really don't know what is a minor saint — but once I read in a book that there are those saints known to us and those known to God only.

What can we learn from the saints today?

I think many of the problems we encounter today have already been dealt with hundreds of years ago, problems about gender equality — we encounter them when we read the lives of the saints. Look at the female saints who had to fight for their own place in history. In today's world, the way we are cut off from our history — somehow I believe that the load on our shoulders is much heavier because we believe that we have to start from scratch, from nothing. While if we look back and know about our past traditions, we shall see that others before us were faced with these problems.

What trends do you see, with regards to interest in the lives of the saints?

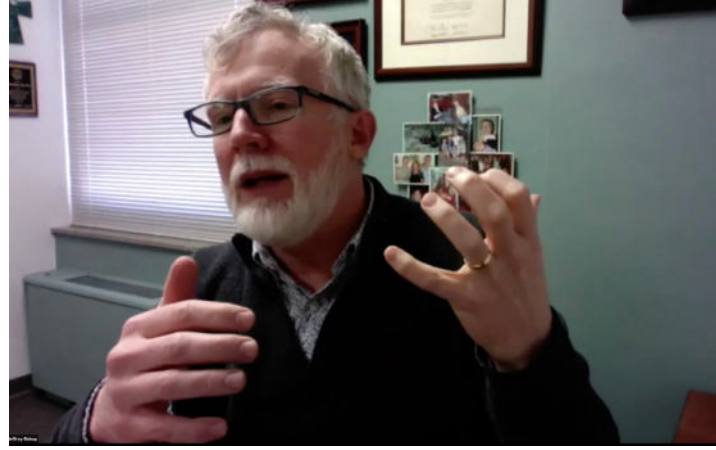
An interest in hagiography has exploded among architects, historians, doctors and lawyers. They understood that in the lives of the Middle Ages you could find the only information we have about that time. We see an increase in interest with the pandemic. We need this metaphysical intersection, this assurance we are not left alone. Science is obviously very important and we need it, but great saints were great scientists.

At the Bollandist Society, the historians here approach the material with equal attention to the scholarly, as well as the spiritual — accomplishing the task of allowing oneself to be moved, while maintaining scholarly rigor. What the Bollandists have got right is: How do you judge the figure that you come across in these documents? Do you judge it according to the standards of the day or according to the very demanding scholarly limits?

Learn more about our programs with the Bollandist Society at www.lumenchristi.org/saints.



Medical Ethics, Science Fiction, & What it Means to be Human



Prof. Jeffrey Bishop presents on the ethical challenges of technology.

NEWMAN FORUM CONFERENCE POSES CHALLENGES OF TECHNOLOGY, HUMAN NATURE TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

More than 100 high school students from 27 schools in nine states participated in the Newman Forum's online conference Feb. 20.

The students engaged in the topic, "Medical Ethics, Science Fiction and What it Means to be Human," with Professors Jeffrey Bishop of Saint Louis University and Michael Murphy of Loyola University Chicago.

Professor Bishop spoke about human beings as inherently technological creatures who utilize tools to survive, and began his lecture with the question, "What is a cyborg?" He guided students through the consideration of a number of potential cyborgs: from science fiction robots, to persons with disabilities who rely upon various medical technologies and a priest who celebrates Eucharist. Is the chalice — "fruit of the vine and work of human hands" — not a form of "techne?" he asked.

He then connected technology with the creation of culture, the Latin root of the word being "cultus," foundation of worship. What do we worship? What is the ultimate form of the human image toward which people orient themselves? He helped students see how this is the foundation for how people discern which uses of technology are right or wrong in pursuing a rightly ordered culture.

Professor Murphy gave a lecture on "Frankenstein," exploring the Faustian bargain and how man is both closer and further from God as he utilizes technology to manipulate nature. He explained the inherent risk that comes with the pursuit of greater knowledge and how literature, art and science are various ways of knowing that allow

people to creatively speculate about Truth. Jesus' use of parables demonstrates how stories are powerful means of invoking right and wrong, he said. Professor Murphy helped students consider the Catholic imagination and a love of learning as a way of loving God.

Though online, these lectures were among the Newman Forum's most interactive to date. Professors Bishop and Murphy both invited student participation and dialogue within the lectures themselves, problematizing with students what the significance of the human body is amid the use of technology and the transcendentals of truth, goodness and beauty. Following each lecture was a brief Q&A. The event concluded with a panel Q&A.

Students "lined up" using the hand-raise function on Zoom. They were so enthusiastic they stayed long after the event's end to converse with the lecturers. Their questions were mostly about how to distinguish between the right and wrong uses of technology and the professors' own suspicions regarding the future of medical tech.

The Newman Forum offers a writing contest with every major conference. The essay contest for this conference invites students to write a research paper on technology and science fiction or a creative piece proffering a new dystopian concept. The winner of each seasonal contest receives the Newman Forum Writer's Prize. This spring, the Newman Forum looks forward to returning to its rotating curriculum of small, Socratic seminars online, gearing up for the 2021 Summer Institute in July.

What do we worship? What is the ultimate form of the human image toward which people orient themselves?



BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

Richard W. Garnett

It was the 1970s in Anchorage, Alaska, when a formative encounter with a Catholic monk led Richard Garnett and his family to embrace the Catholic faith.

“I have these memories of being in kindergarten and being taken to Mass,” he said.

Since the family did not know anyone else who was Catholic, Garnett and his younger sister served as their parents’ godparents at baptism.

“I suspect it wasn’t canonically valid, but hopefully it still works,” said Garnett.

He said his summer experience as a diocesan camp counselor in Soldotna, Alaska, where he taught CCD and designed curricula for the children’s daily hour of spiritual formation, was a “funny” foreshadowing of his career in academia.

Today, Garnett is the Paul J. Schierl Professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame and director of Notre Dame’s program on church, state and society. Recently, he also joined the Lumen Christi Institute’s board of directors.

“Over the past 30 years,” Garnett said, “Notre Dame has attracted legal scholars who appreciate the freedom to integrate their faith commitments and the implications of those commitments into their study or teaching of law.”

Garnett has taught classes on Catholic social thought and morality. While these classes are not required by the law school, they attract many students interested in the normative questions that swim under the surface of secular legal doctrines.

“Catholic social thought is intensely personalist,” he said. “It always directs us into considering public policy questions and to keep in view what a person is and why people matter.”

Elaborating on this point, Garnett defined law as the art of coordinating interactions among human persons and of

supporting and facilitating the building of communities.

“One of our shared premises is that you can’t really do law correctly if you’re not thinking about what it means to be a person,” he said. “In my view, the church’s proposals provide the best answers to those questions, giving us the best possible materials for the creation of a good legal regime.”

Garnett expressed his longtime admiration for the University of Chicago, which made his decision to collaborate with the Lumen Christi Institute an easy one.

“I think it’s one of the great universities in the world,” he said. “U Chicago has always relentlessly emphasized the aim of the university as being — not about credentialing people or providing social status — about the pursuit of knowledge and truth, and I think that’s entirely consonant with the church’s intellectual tradition.

“The church holds up the possibility that there is such a thing as truth that is worth pursuing,” he continued. “And although U Chicago isn’t Catholic, its ethos is very simpatico with the church’s proposals about what higher education should be.”

Garnett’s first experience of the Lumen Christi Institute was almost 20 years ago, as a participant in a conference on capital punishment. After meeting Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., Bishop Robert Barron and other great scholars at the conference, Garnett made it a point to follow the institute’s activities.

As a visiting law professor at the University of Chicago in 2007, he got to know Lumen Christi’s executive director,

Thomas Levergood, and his appreciation deepened for the mission of the institute.

This year, with Garnett on the board, Lumen Christi is hosting an initiative on the Catholic criminal justice reform movement (see pg. 7), which he is pleased to help advance. When asked about

“One of our shared premises is that you can’t really do law correctly if you’re not thinking about what it means to be a person...In my view the church’s proposals provide the best answers to those questions.”



Garnett (right) speaking at a Lumen Christi event in 2017 with Prof. Andrew Koppelman (left) and Dean Daniel Rodriguez (center) of Northwestern Law School.

the relationship between criminal justice and the Catholic intellectual tradition, Garnett highlighted the impact of Catholic personalism. “Criminal law is one of those areas in which the impact on human persons is so stark,” he said.

The process, through and through, impacts people, whether the person is the victim of a crime or whether the person receives a punishment meted out by the state, he said.

“We have to think about questions like: How is this justified? What is the purpose of punishment? And what are its limits?” Garnett said. “The Catholic social tradition is able to talk coherently about the rights and the dignity of criminal offenders, without falling into, in my view, mistaken reductionist accounts of human behavior.”

Catholic social teaching lends its vocabulary of justice, mercy, redemption and rehabilitation to legal discourse that is all too often mired in controversy; it also brings new concepts and tools to the table when it comes to criminal justice reform, he said. Garnett added that he believes Catholic social teaching in the current political climate is “not narrowly partisan” and avoids the cliches from each political camp.

The law professor said he is grateful to serve on the institute’s board, which allows him to “give back” and to “grow personally as a teacher and a scholar.”

“My students and I have benefitted from the work being done by Lumen Christi, so it feels good for me contribute to the extent possible,” he said.

He said he expects his research and teaching in the areas of criminal law, law and religion, and religious freedom will benefit the institute as well.



LCI Resumes Summer Seminars

Our flagship summer seminars return in 2021 with new and renewed offerings for graduate and undergraduate students. Taking every necessary precaution, we now offer five seminars in the summer of 2021.

The Newman Forum will host its first in-person summer conference for high school students on truth, goodness, and beauty.

In addition to our staple graduate seminars on the the works of St. John Henry Newman and St. Augustine’s “City of God,” a third seminar for graduate students on Irenaeus’s “Against Heresies,” a classic early Christian text, will be led by Fr. John Behr and Lewis Ayres at St. Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana.

Finally, in Los Angeles, we are hosting a summer seminar on “René Girard: Understanding the Faith in a Secular Age,” led by Grant Kaplan and Trevor Merrill.

Learn more or support us at www.lumenchristi.org/seminars

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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 allow us to continue our mission of promoting Catholic intellectual life. **Special naming opportunities are available for gifts that exceed \$25,000.**

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United by Their Loves: Deciphering Augustine's Understanding of a People

Saturday, May 1, 10 a.m. CT, Online

Jennifer Frey, *University of South Carolina*
Russell Hittinger, *Lumen Christi Institute*
Fr. Michael Sherwin, OP, *University of Fribourg*



A Saint of Our Own: How the Quest for a Holy Hero Helped Catholics Become American

Thursday, June 10, 12 p.m.

University Club of Chicago, 76 E. Monroe. St

Kathleen Sprows Cummings
University of Notre Dame