

The Bishop John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture & Action

VERITAS



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Deepening Appreciation of the Beauty, Wisdom, Vitality, & Diversity of the Catholic Tradition

THE MISSION

The Bishop John S. Cummins Institute for Catholic Thought, Culture and Action seeks to deepen appreciation among all constituents of the campus community for the beauty, wisdom, vitality, and diversity of the Catholic Tradition. We do this by:

Fostering a conversation between the Catholic tradition & contemporary intellectual life.

The Institute understands the tradition of Catholic higher education as one of providing a context in which *fides quaerens intellectum*, "faith seeking understanding," can take place. The Institute is a resource for integrating the search for faith and reason throughout the curriculum and the academy.

Promoting a sacramental understanding of reality and the vision that this world is "charged with the grandeur of God."

The Institute understands that Catholic faith is not about the intellect alone, but that it manifests itself also in rich and varied cultural expressions: in liturgy and ritual, in literature and art, in music and dance, as well as in our daily lives as a campus community.

Supporting all members of the community in leading lives that are respectful of human dignity and responsive to social justice concerns.

The Institute promotes the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and endorses initiatives developed by its representative groups and other members of the community that aim to inculcate habits of the heart and faith and zeal for transforming lives.



ON THE COVER: SAINT FRANCIS

CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR, 1

WHEN YOU THINK YOU KNOW, 3

LET GRACE WORK, 5

NEW CHAIR'S GOALS, 7

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

In a recent discussion at the Cummins Institute, we took up the questions of the seeming decline in membership and the changing perceptions of the Church among young Catholics. Our discussion was prompted by an essay of Peter Steinfels, "Further Adrift", published in *Commonweal* (22 October 2010). While recognizing the reality identified by the author, we quickly shifted the direction of our conversation from a reflection on the drifting away of young Catholic professionals and the diminution of Catholic identity in their lives to the question of the meaning of the faith for college-age Catholics. Our conversation was aided by the participation of a student member of the Institute who offered that the negative concerns of older Catholics are a real "turn-off" for her peers and what she and others need is support in their own faith journeys.

The most fruitful part of our discussion was an exploration of what support for young Catholics looks like. Personal relationships rose to the fore in our conversation as the most meaningful support possible for Catholic students at college and university. It is in relationships that older Catholics have with younger ones that authentic witnesses to the life of faith are exchanged. In the spirit of our discussion we present to our readership in this issue of the journal two essays submitted last spring to the Mission and Ministry Center as reflections on attendance at the Los Angeles Religious Education Conference held in March of 2010. Our two authors are students at Saint Mary's College. Brenden Bell is a graduating senior with a major in Religious Studies and Julie Cozzetto is a sophomore majoring in Integral Studies. Both essays point to the strength of faith in a time of uncertainty in life. Both testify to the fact that having all the answers to life is neither possible nor necessary. Facing the present moment with all of its doubts and uncertainty is the daily challenge of our students. The wisdom that comes from acceptance of uncertainty opens the path to faith. Faith, in turn, is strengthened by the witness of older Catholics who have incorporated into their lives the central tenet of Catholicism, the personal relationship with God in Christ mediated through prayer and the sacraments and experienced in relationship with others who together constitute the Church, or the communion of the faithful. We offer the personal reflections of our students as a message of support to their peers and encouragement to older Catholics never to take for granted the impact that they have on the faith formation of the young.

There has been a great harmony of efforts lately at our College in addressing the living dialogue of the faithful with the world around them. Our Montini Fellow for this academic year was John C. Haughey, S.J., S.T.D. Father Haughey spent a week with us in the fall, sharing with us his vision of a Catholic college. He told us time and again to appreciate what we have here by way of a vibrant and peaceable community. Through his eyes we were able to glimpse the good that we have. We salute Father Haughey for bearing the Gospel to us. "How beautiful the feet of the messenger who brings good news" (Romans 10:15). His visit coincided with a campus conference on "Mary in the Modern World," organized by Brother Mark McVann, FSC, of the Theology and Religious Studies Department and Brother Charles Hilken, FSC, of the History Department, with the assistance of many others. The conference was meant to explore the ongoing tradition of Marian devotion in the world today. As the keynote speaker, Diane Schoemperlen, the award-winning Canadian novelist, addressed the College on the experience of writing a novel about the Virgin Mary. An exhibit of personal objects of Marian veneration lent by members of the College community was on display during the month of October. Most recently, the College has welcomed the inauguration of the Catholic Liturgical Arts Committee, supported by the Office of the President and the Cummins Institute, and directed by Mr. Louis Lebherz, Brother Vincent Malham Artist in Residence.

The Institute saw a change in leadership with departure of Brother Donald Mansir, FSC, for a well-earned sabbatical. I would like to close this, my first letter as chair of the Institute, with a word of gratitude for my predecessor, Brother Donald, whose quiet dedication saw the Institute through its formative years to its present stability as a vital part of the dialogue about the Catholic mission in higher education and contemporary American society. If there is a single word that captures the teaching of Brother Donald that word is hospitality. Hospitality for him is more than

an attribute of Christian life. It is a central theological truth of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It is easy to understand the welcome that the Institute has received on our campus and the wider community, given the irenic nature of that teaching. My thanks to Brother Donald for the consistency of his message, both in word and deed.

The cover art of this issue is meant to express this message of gratitude. It is a very early Benedictine rendering of the likeness of Saint Francis of Assisi, who stands as an icon of hospitality, both within communal faith life and in missionary outreach to the rest of the world. The artist, as identified by William R. Cook, *Images of St. Francis of Assisi in Painting, Stone, and Glass from the Earliest Images to ca. 1320 in Italy* (Florence: 1999), was the St. Gregory Master or the Third Master of Anagni (Roman Painters) and the image is a fresco of Saint Francis of Assisi, in the cave-chapel of San Gregorio, at the Holy Cave of Subiaco. This likeness, Professor Cook judged, may be an image of a Benedictine monk refashioned to represent Saint Francis after the death of Pope Gregory IX (1241) who dedicated the chapel in 1228-1229 and was a close friend and supporter of the saint. In using the likeness of a monk for Francis, the artist has captured the early bond between the Benedictine tradition (especially hospitality) and Francis' own spirituality. It is fitting, therefore, that while we may not have an early likeness of the saint in this image, we can admire it nevertheless as an authentic representation of his simplicity, humility, and his holiness.

Brother Charles Hilken, FSC
Chair

WHEN YOU THINK YOU KNOW

BRENDEN BELL

One of my favorite experiences at Saint Mary's College was a course on the television show, *Lost*, during the January Term of 2010. Beyond being fun to talk about, the show is one of the most compelling modern dramas of any medium today. The course dealt with philosophical underpinnings of the series but that is not what I want to address in this reflection. Instead, I would like to point to the feelings one gets while trying to unravel the mystery of the show. It is disorienting when something happens which does not easily fit into the greater narrative. One struggles to put the puzzle together without having all the pieces. Every once in a while you think that you have finally figured it out, all the pieces fit and those pieces still missing seem to be coming into place. But it is at that moment, when clarity is on the horizon, that something completely unsuspected happens and everything you thought was true needs to be challenged and reevaluated.

This experience, which *Lost* fans have had weekly, is very similar to my experience traveling to the 2010 Los Angeles Religious Education Congress. I had thought that I had figured out some aspects of my spiritual life. I had thought that I knew what to expect of the Congress, since this was my sixth time in attending. I have been Catholic all my life and have been involved in ministry for about six years so I thought I knew ministry. I have almost completed my major in

Theology and Religious Studies and so I believed that I had a competent grasp of theology. In the months leading to the Congress I had been investigating graduate schools and had a trip to Boston College set up for shortly after the Congress and so I thought I knew a little bit about where I was going. But at this time, when everything was coming together and the confusion of the past was fading away, God came into my life and shook it up like a snow globe. I am still waiting now for the snow to settle and for the picture to get clear again.

What I am experiencing is confusing and disheartening because it makes me second guess not only what I thought I knew but also my whole discernment process. I really did not know how to respond to this Congress and to be honest I am not really sure what was different about it. But let me back up

a bit and try to explain how I went into the Congress. When I was choosing sessions to attend I did not want to choose only the fun or popular speakers, the ones who make you feel good and are just a joy to watch. They are very useful and can give you great insight but I had already

done that in previous years. This year I stepped out of my comfort zone and took sessions that I thought would help me with my ministry and with my life



in general. I chose two areas of focus, prayer and faith formation. Though the speakers I went to were not the most popular or the most captivating, I found, unlike previous years when I chose more popular speakers and missed more sessions, this year I attended everything I selected. Because these speakers were not the 'big shows', I had to concentrate more to hear what they were really saying.

What they were saying was not all that new, but from where I was in my spiritual life, it was said in a new way. For the last three years I have been doing academic theology and it has been very rewarding. I have learned much and my understanding of aspects of Catholic teaching has grown. But what I have not had much experience with during my time at Saint Mary's College is taking what I have learned and teaching it in a manageable way. What I learned here at the Congress was that even though everything I have learned is important, since most people are not theologians, how things are taught is just as important. I heard over and over again the value of relationships. After thinking about it I realize that it was another relationship that first developed the one I have with Christ. I first learned about God through my Mom who, as she was rediscovering her own faith, passed it on to me. While I have learned so much more from different places I would not be where I am today if not for that initial relationship.

The other thing I already knew but needed to hear again was love. All relationships are built on love and that is their starting point. I have had long

theological conversations with different people who have some problem with Christianity. They have either fallen away from the faith or they seem not to understand something about it, but our conversations follow the same pattern. They start out with logical arguments but, as the conversation goes on, a deeper reality is revealed that is based on emotions. The problem is that we are starting at the wrong end. Logical arguments have been created to help make sense of the emotions. Whatever the deeper issue, logic will not solve it. We have to reach the heart and see the real reason why someone cannot accept the teachings of the Church and in order to do that we need to have a relationship built on a love that can understand where others are coming from.

This experience was disorienting because it made me look at my faith and my life in a different way. Does that mean that I have abandoned all of my beliefs and what I thought was true? No. In fact, I trust that once I have time to process this experience, my beliefs will be much stronger and I will be able to convey them in a new and, I hope, more accessible way. What

happened at the Congress has had a humbling effect. I thought that I had some things figured out, but just when I thought I had it all together, my world gets flipped upside down. God was telling me that I am not there yet, that I have to finish this journey that He has put me on, and now just one stage of it. While it is humbling to see that I don't have the big picture it is also freeing and empowering. To be a disciple is to sit at another's feet. Though humbling, it is

"ALL RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILT ON LOVE AND THAT IS THEIR STARTING POINT."

the only way to learn, by admitting our ignorance and then seeking the truth.

The lesson I take from the Congress is while some questions will be answered, sometimes even very big questions, life will always have mysteries. We just don't see them all because we are always focusing on them one at a time. We focus so much on one question that it seems to be the only question and we are surprised once we have figured it out that we have another question right

there waiting for us. Now I know that once I figure out what all this means I will have another question just waiting for me and that this is good because how boring it would be if I knew everything. That is why people watch *Lost*. It is the mystery that keeps it interesting. That is the beauty of our Church. Our faith contains mysteries that we could never fully understand but with the gift of faith we can truly say "we believe."

LET GRACE WORK

JULIE COZZETTO

Whenever I attend a conference of this magnitude I always enter with a multitude of questions and fears. I feel that I am not "Catholic enough" to attend a conference like this. With these thoughts in mind, I went to Congress looking for answers to my questions of faith in a world where it is so hard to live by my own values and beliefs and still survive socially and professionally. The workshops I attended mirrored my need for answers. Every workshop included the ideas of fearing and still trusting in God and His plan for us. Every speaker took a different aspect of our fears and mistrust, but they came to a general conclusion that we, as people, have a very skewed idea of ourselves, both for the good and the bad. Though the experience was eye-opening, I came back with more and different questions than when I went. While this is frustrating, I also recognize that "with deep faith comes deep doubts" (Robert Wicks). The workshops challenged me to push myself further, to ask questions

and seek answers and thereby attempt to understand my relationship with God better.

I know that I will never understand God. He defines me, I do not define Him. While none of the workshops were bad, some stood out for me. Robert Wicks' "Bounce: Enhancing Spiritual and Psychological Resilience", showed us that we all will have dark moments but it is still possible to find God in the mess. His main point was that it is not about others and their flaws, it is about us. We should "seek not to change others, but seek to change ourselves" (Robert Wicks). This puts it plainly; God is not looking for us to save the world, rather he wants us to be the best we can be and lead by example. In other words, "Preach the Gospel always and, if necessary, use words" (Robert Wicks). He focused on recognizing our strengths and utilizing those to serve God's wants. John Angotti's workshop "Fear is not an Option: Choices of Faith" followed this general line saying that we must "live our ministry, not just on Sundays" (John Angotti). In this sense, we must be aware and conscious

of why we do what we do in order to grow in our relationship with God and each other. "We recognize Jesus in the Eucharist in order to recognize Jesus in other people" (John Angotti) so we must be able to see the light of Christ in others even when our opinions don't match, or they make a choice or act contrary to what we think is right, or simply we don't like them nor they us. His message fit well with Megan McKenna's workshop. Hers was the "Story of Abundance in our Life and Soul". She recognized that our faith is neither easy nor convenient, but it calls us to a better place. Being a Christian calls us to stand with someone rather than staying quiet. Jesus associated with people we would never dream of going near, the homeless man begging for money, the stripper dancing in a club, or the person who was talking bad about us last week. Jesus told the leaders of religion that they were wrong and that the way they led others and prayed was not what God wanted. Prayer is to "stand in all our sins and not run when we are seen in those sins" (Megan McKenna). The workshops fit well with Matthew Kelly's speech "One Dynamic Catholic," in which he pointed out that the most involved Catholics are ones that read and live the Scripture. The main consensus is that we as Catholics need to step back and reevaluate what God is calling us to do, and pursue it in everything we do, regardless of what society expects.

The conclusions I came to were not answers to my questions. Rather, I figured out some better questions to ask. I may not have any concrete

answers or even vague answers, but I do know where to start looking, the Bible. When I really want to hear God speaking to me I only have to do two things, be quiet and listen. This message could come also from a person I see and talk to everyday, or through prayer. Whether in these ways or when hearing the scriptures I have listened to glassy-eyed, it is time to pay attention. If there is anything that I took from this weekend, it is that I have to be present at all times in order to hear God and do His will.

This is true of all people in all situations, including the involvement at Mass. I had the opportunity to go the Youth Mass where there were 8,000 young and older Catholics coming together to share the Eucharist. It was amazing to see the participation that went into that Mass, the volunteers that came out of the woodwork in order

to make it possible. Statistics indicate that seven percent of a parish's population do all the work to keep it running smoothly (Matthew Kelly). How do we change this lack of motivation to be involved in the Mass? What are ways to fix this huge gap in participation? While I do not have an answer or solution I do know that awareness of this fact may foster the need

to help. I have heard that people say that there are so many others who help that they are not needed. So maybe it is a lack of awareness that allows the problem to continue.

I went into Congress not really knowing what to expect and came out with a new challenge. I have a stronger desire to look for answers wherever I



can find them and push to develop ones that satisfy my questions instead of accepting the easiest ones. I have a lot of questions that still need answers, but that is what faith is, accepting without proof. I believe that this experience is worthwhile for everyone. It changes our perspective and dares us to try a different path. Whether we know what we are looking for or not, we will come out having heard some educated

speakers that are on the same path as we are. They are looking at the same questions with a different insight and so we can then see things from their standpoint. The Religious Education Congress is a time and place for one to let inhibitions down and let the grace of God work through the speakers and in ourselves in order to develop our relationship with God further.

NEW CHAIR'S GOALS

BROTHER CHARLES HILKEN, FSC

The presence within a Catholic College of an organized body dedicated to Catholic thought, culture, and action has no greater purpose than evangelization. The primary means of pursuing this purpose are witness and teaching. Regarding witness, one is put in mind of the popular saying, "Preach the Gospel always and if necessary use words."¹ Insofar as the Institute is a collaborator with the rest of the campus community in carrying out its Catholic mission, its members are called upon to be witnesses to Gospel joy, the joy that Pope Paul VI proclaimed in the last Apostolic Exhortation of his pontificate, *On Christian Joy*, 9 May 1975 (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19750509_gaudete-in-domino_en.html, 2/14/11)

Joy always springs from a certain outlook on man and on God. "When your eye is sound, your whole body too is filled with light."⁽⁷⁸⁾ We are touching here on the original and inalienable dimension of the human person: his vocation to happiness always passes through the channels of knowledge and love, of contemplation and action. May you attain this good quality, which is in your brother's soul, and this divine presence so close to the human heart!

Let the agitated members of various groups therefore reject the excesses of systematic and destructive criticism! Without departing from a realistic viewpoint, let Christian communities become centers of optimism where all the members resolutely endeavor to perceive the positive aspect of people and events. "Love does not rejoice in what is wrong but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure."⁽⁷⁹⁾

The attainment of such an outlook is not just a matter of psychology. It is also a fruit of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit, who dwells fully in the person of

Jesus, made Him during His earthly life so alert to the joys of daily life, so tactful and persuasive for putting sinners back on the road to a new youth of heart and mind! It is this same Spirit who animated the Blessed Virgin and each of the saints. It is this same Spirit who still today gives to so many Christians the joy of living day by day their particular vocation, in the peace and hope which surpass setbacks and sufferings. It is the Spirit of Pentecost who today leads very many followers of Christ along the paths of prayer, in the cheerfulness of filial praise, towards the humble and joyous service of the disinherited and of those on the margins of society. For joy cannot be dissociated from sharing. In God Himself, all is joy because all is giving.

In following the papal exhortation to joy the Institute can mirror and help to perpetuate the authentic Christian community of the New Testament here at Saint Mary's. When we look to the New Testament to see the Christian community in action, everywhere there is the power of attraction to its message of hope and new life, and when people are drawn to its message then there is the work of the Apostles in teaching the faith. The Cummins Institute enjoys a mostly ancillary role in evangelization and teaching. The Institute seeks to maintain good and supportive relations with other campus bodies, especially the Theology and Religious Studies Department, the Office of Mission and Ministry, CILSA, the Henning Institute, the Catholic Liturgical Arts Committee, the Center for Regional Economy, Faculty Development, and Residential Life. Through its in-service readings Institute members educate each other; through sponsored lectures and conferences Cummins helps bring authentic voices of the faith to the campus community; and through its financial support of charitable activities and engaged Catholic learning the Institute furthers the work of faith in action. Because of the diversity of religious belief in our campus and in the world, the Institute participates also in giving apostolic witness to dialogue with people who bring to our community the riches of their own traditions and personal creeds. Here our teaching ministry is expressed most clearly in our ability to walk with others and to share as appropriate our understanding of the Christian faith.

Another privileged activity of the Institute, one that goes beyond and involves the culmination of witness and teaching, is its support of the rich liturgical life of the Christian community. The Institute is attentive to the needs of Mission and Ministry in this regard and is supportive of all efforts made to maintain and develop liturgical practice. The belief, moreover, that we share with diverse religious communities in the intrinsic value of public worship especially when the College is more keenly aware of the timeliness of thanksgiving for favors received, petition in moments of sadness and crisis, and the need for help in our common journey, leads us to support ecumenical services beyond the scope of Church liturgies.

¹ This phrase, most often attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi, seems to be of very recent origin. The ascription to Saint Francis, however, is not without merit. In chapter sixteen of his first Rule, Francis described the twofold manner in which his Brothers could live in Muslim lands, "Indeed the friars, who go, can conduct themselves spiritually among them in two manners. One manner is, that they cause no arguments nor strife, but be subject 'to every human creature for God's sake' (1 Pt 2:13) and confess themselves to be Christians. The other manner is, that, when they have seen that it pleases God, they announce the word of God, so that they may believe in God the Omnipotent, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator of all things, (and) in the Redeemer and Savior, the Son, and that they may be baptized and become Christians, because 'he who has' not 'been reborn of water and the Holy Spirit, cannot enter the Kingdom of God' (cf. Jn 3:5)" (<http://www.francescanitor.org/archive/porta.html,2/14/11>). It is easy to see the origin of the modern maxim in the saint from Assisi's expansive view of missionary activity, which begins with the manner of living of Christians in Muslim lands and only then proceeds to their proclamation of Christian doctrine.

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"I HAVE TO BE PRESENT AT ALL TIMES IN ORDER TO HEAR GOD
AND DO HIS WILL " JULIE COZZETTO