

NEWSLETTER

OF THE THOMAS MORE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF CATHOLIC THOUGHT AND CULTURE

Rockhurst University

Vol. 1, December 2000

Who Are We?

You are reading the first of what, hopefully, will be a series of newsletters published by the Thomas More Center for the Study of Catholic Thought and Culture at Rockhurst University. This newsletter is intended to introduce you to the Thomas More Center, explain some of its still fledgling activities and encourage thought regarding aspects of what has come to be known as "Catholic studies." The writers of this initial newsletter, all members of the committee for the Thomas More Center, invite your comments and responses to these articles, to the work of the committee and to the nature and fortunes of Catholic studies at Rockhurst.

As you may be aware, many Catholic colleges and universities have established Catholic studies programs over the last decade. Some of these programs have proven quite popular – the Catholic studies center at St. Thomas University in St. Paul, Minnesota enrolls over 100 student-majors, sponsors a study abroad program in Rome and publishes a respected academic journal entitled *Logos*. Other centers have begun academic major and/or minor programs, hosted seminars and speakers on the Catholic intellectual tradition, subsidized research on Catholic topics ranging from Catholic filmmakers to social justice, and encouraged community outreach programs. The move to explore options for Catholic studies at Rockhurst University began in the spring of 1999 when Father Kinerk convened a task force of faculty members. That task force submitted a proposal, accepted by Father Kinerk last spring, calling for the creation of the Thomas More Center for the Study of Catholic Thought and Culture on the Rockhurst campus. The present committee of the Thomas More Center seeks your input as it looks to build a program at Rockhurst.

You might be wondering about the work of the committee to date. For instance, why did the task force suggest the name "Thomas More Center for the Study of Catholic Thought and Culture" for this venture? Thomas More, the 16th century English humanist scholar, statesman and martyr, is the patron saint of Rockhurst University. Father Callahan informs me that Rockhurst is the only Jesuit university to claim a lay, non-Jesuit patron. More represents several important dimensions in the Catholic tradition – critical and humanistic in his scholarship, active in politics and society, international and cosmopolitan in temperament and perspective, and deeply committed to the values of his Catholic faith, More is often regarded as a model for Catholic intellectuals (and public servants – the Vatican recently named him the patron saint of politicians!). The task force hoped to convey the critical nature of Catholic studies and its broad scope in directing its efforts to the "study of Catholic thought and culture." As it develops, the center should encourage serious discussion of all aspects of Catholicism. The focus is not narrowly ecclesiastical but inclusive of Catholic literature, history, fine arts, philosophy and theology. Catholic thought is expressed through scientific study, both in the natural sciences and the social sciences. Catholic culture includes all dimensions of the Catholic community, especially the ideal of social justice incorporated in the social teachings of the Church.

What kind of activities will the center sponsor? The possibilities are many at this point. We hope to encourage faculty research and dialogue through lectures and seminars as well as

stimulate student interest through existing or new courses, possibly even new academic programs as the situation warrants. We want to involve the broader Kansas City community through continuing education opportunities and outreach programs. In sum, we will explore any opportunity to promote dialogue on the Catholic intellectual tradition. The committee is open to any suggestions, comments or concerns expressed by the Rockhurst community. The Thomas More Center will not have fulfilled its purpose if it does not include the entire community in a serious, open and critical discussion of the varied aspects of Catholic thought and culture.

Some more specific news of center activities – the course offered last spring on Catholicism at the Millennium provides the subject for the first book by the Rockhurst University Press. *Catholicism at the Millennium: Transition in the Church of Tradition* features essays by various Rockhurst faculty members and will appear in print early in the spring of 2001. For the spring semester 2001, a new course, appearing in the schedule as HU4001 Special Topics: Catholic Studies, will be offered on Thursday afternoons (2-3 p.m.) for one hour of credit. The course features lectures by Rockhurst faculty from various disciplines and some experts from the local community on Catholic biographies (the lives and legacies of prominent Catholics throughout history). All are invited to attend these lectures.

Finally, the committee is extremely proud to announce that David J. O'Brien of Holy Cross College will visit Rockhurst on February 12-14, 2001. Dr. O'Brien is a professor of history and Director of the Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture at Holy Cross. He is a well-known scholar and engaging speaker on American Catholicism. His visit will include meetings with the faculty to discuss his book *From the Heart of the American Church: Catholic Higher Education and American Culture* and a public lecture on the evening of Tuesday, February 13 entitled "Catholic Studies and the Renewal of American Catholicism." Everyone is invited and encouraged to participate in the activities surrounding Dr. O'Brien's visit. More details will follow.

I hope you enjoy the articles that follow. Please feel free to contact me or any member of the committee with your ideas, suggestions or concerns regarding the future of Catholic studies at Rockhurst University.

Rick Janet

Collegial Conference on Catholic Studies

As Rockhurst University has taken its first few steps towards realizing plans for the Thomas More Center for the Study of Catholic Thought and Culture, we have greatly benefited from the wisdom and experience of colleges and universities much further along on the journey. One valuable source for such wisdom has been an ongoing series of collegial conferences on Catholic Studies including a very dynamic one at John Carroll University last April.

With representatives from Jesuit and non-Jesuit Catholic colleges and universities from across the country, those in attendance at the John Carroll conference heard academic leaders from institutions with Catholic Studies Programs in place. And the message strongly emphasized the value of such programs to faculty, students, and the communities that the respective institutions serve. For example, the Director of the Center for Catholic Studies at The University of St. Thomas (MN), Dr. Don Briel, indicated the rapid growth in the undergraduate minors and majors in Catholic Studies, such growth that St. Thomas began offering a Master of Arts in Catholic Studies this fall. Similarly, the Director at John Carroll University indicated that over 20 students had chosen to minor in Catholic Studies in only the second year of his program.

The consensus of panelists and speakers was that Catholic Studies seemed to be meeting a deep need among students and the participating faculty.

Of course, the wisdom that comes from experience also suggested that those just setting up their programs ought to be very careful to ensure the intellectual rigor of Catholic Studies courses. As part of this concern for rigor, new programs ought to be prepared to answer questions and address concerns: What is the role of Catholic Studies programs in the Church's evangelization of the world? Do Catholic Studies courses teach only one view of Catholicism? Does the presence of faith in academic classes weaken intellectual rigor? Taking such advice seriously, the committee presently overseeing the growth of the Thomas More Center is trying to prepare a set of criteria by which proposed courses will receive Catholic Studies designation and by which intellectual rigor will be preserved.

Already off to a strong start, the Thomas More Center involved 12 faculty, 18 students, and about 20 different members of the Kansas City community and 12 different administrators in a 1-credit course offered last spring, Catholicism at the Millennium. The Center hopes to do the same this coming spring with Catholic Biography. Most of the presentations in Catholicism at the Millennium are being published as a collection of essays in a forthcoming book, a mark of pride among those involved with the Thomas More Center. Interestingly, participants at the John Carroll Conference indicated that such publications often proceed from Catholic Studies programs.

In the future, the Thomas More Center plans to follow the lead and advice of successful Catholic Studies Programs by bringing to campus speakers of national and international reputation to share their thoughts on issues central to the Catholic intellectual life. Along these lines, the Center activities might encourage faculty to participate in Sheed & Ward's Catholic Studies Textbook Project or to take advantage of the Lilly Endowment's "Religion and Higher Education Initiative" -- both of which were described at great length and with a great deal of enthusiasm at the John Carroll conference.

John Carroll University's conference on Catholic Studies was extremely valuable because it made all of the above information available to attendees. But, even more importantly, it affirmed that what we are building at Rockhurst University in the Thomas More Center -- with its focus on Catholic Thought and Culture -- is valuable to faculty, students, and the community as a whole.

Joe Cirincione

*The Promotion of Justice
in Jesuit Higher Education*

On October 6, 2000, the Reverend Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, delivered a major address at a conference held at Santa Clara University on the occasion of the university's 150th anniversary. The conference was attended by delegations from all 28 Jesuit colleges and universities and the two graduate schools of theology sponsored by the Society of Jesus. Rockhurst's delegation included Fr. Edward Kinerk, Fr. Jack Callahan, Dean William Haefele, and professor Gerald Miller. The title of Fr. Kolvenbach's talk was "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education." What follows is a synopsis of the talk.

Fr. Kolvenbach stated the question: "How can the Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States express faith-filled concern for justice in what they are as Christian academies of higher learning, in what their faculty do, and in what their students become?"

To respond to this question Fr. Kolvenbach began by reflecting on how the Jesuit commitment to the "service of faith and the promotion of justice" came about in 1975 and how it affected the Jesuits and their institutions. His description of how the Jesuits came "out of nowhere" to what some have called a radical stand on faith/justice is both interesting and enlightening.

What is meant by the service of faith? Kolvenbach explains that the Jesuits, faithful to the Vatican Council, sees Jesuit teaching and preaching "not to proselytize, not to impose our religion on others, but rather to propose Jesus and his message of God's Kingdom in a spirit of love to everyone." The service of faith "cannot mean anything other than to bring the counter-cultural gift of Christ to our world."

What is meant by the promotion of justice? Kolvenbach points out that the famous Decree 4 of the Jesuits 32nd General Congregation in 1975 did not use words like charity, mercy, or love (quite unfashionable words at the time). Rather it uses justice as a concrete, radical but proportionate response to an unjustly suffering world. "Fostering the virtue of justice is not enough. Only a substantive justice can bring about the kinds of structural and attitudinal changes that are needed to uproot those sinful oppressive injustices that are a scandal against humanity and God."

Kolvenbach then goes on to describe how the rather mild phrase "promotion of justice" has been heard by some as call to violence, revolution and subversion. Just recently, for example, the U.S. State Department had to apologize for calling certain Jesuits in Columbia as "Marxist-inspired." In addition the juxtaposition of faith and justice led to unilaterally emphasizing one aspect of the mission to the detriment of the other – that, in fact faith and justice were somehow adversaries. In fact, the justice envisioned is not some ideological stance, be it Marxist or free market. Rather, it is a "justice of the Gospel which embodies God's love and saving mercy."

And what of the American Jesuit university? Kolvenbach points out that for four hundred and fifty years Jesuit education has sought to educate the "whole person" intellectually, and professionally, psychologically, morally and spiritually. But in the world which is emerging the whole person is different from the whole person of the Industrial Revolution or the 20th century. "Tomorrow's whole person cannot be whole without an educated awareness of society and culture to which to contribute socially, generously, and in the real world . . . Students must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively. They should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose and act for the rights of others, especially for the disadvantaged and the oppressed.."

He goes on to say that Jesuit universities are blessed by a variety of in service programs and that these "should not be too optional or peripheral, but at the core of every Jesuit university's program of studies." This does not make the university a "training camp for social activists." Rather, students need close involvement with the poor and marginal now in order to learn about the real world and to become responsible adults.

And faculty? Their mission is to "tirelessly to seek the truth and to form each student into a whole person" who will take responsibility for the real world. Faculty research "not only obeys the canon of each discipline, but ultimately embraces human reality in order to help make the world a more fitting place for six billion of us to inhabit. I want to affirm that university

knowledge is valuable for its own sake and at the same time is knowledge that must ask itself, 'For whom? For what?'"

"If the professors choose viewpoints incompatible with the justice of the Gospel and consider researching, teaching and learning to be separable from moral responsibility for their social repercussions, they are sending a message to their students. They are telling them that they can pursue their careers and self-interest without reference to anyone 'other' than themselves.

"By contrast, when faculty do take up inter-disciplinary dialogue and socially-engaged research in partnership with social ministries, they are exemplifying and modeling knowledge which is service, and the students learn by imitating them as 'masters of life and moral commitment.'"

"Every Jesuit academy of higher learning is called to live in a social reality . . . and to live for that social reality, to shed university intelligence upon it and to use university influence to transform it."

Fr. Kolvenbach concludes by quoting *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* where Pope John Paul II charges Catholic universities with a challenging agenda for teaching, research and service: "The dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, the quality of personal and family life, the protection of nature, the search for peace and political stability, a more just sharing in the world's resources, and a new economic and political order that will better serve the human community at a national and international level."

He concludes: "These are both high ideals and concrete tasks. I encourage our Jesuit colleges and universities to take them up with critical understanding and deep convictions, with buoyant faith and much hope in the early years of the new century."

John Callahan, S.J.

Spiritual Exercises Lead to Campus Groups

Personal spiritual development has always been a hallmark of the Jesuit tradition. At Rockhurst, we are blessed with an ongoing Jesuit-lay collaboration that invites all members of our community to explore, reflect and deepen the spiritual aspects of our lives and who we are.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola have been offered to members of the Rockhurst community for over 10 years. In that time, numerous faculty, administrators and staff have completed this very special retreat in Ignatian spirituality. The Jesuits at Rockhurst, especially Fathers Gene Arthur and Bill LaCroix, collaborating with those first community members to make this retreat, formed two groups dedicated to keeping Ignatian spirituality an ongoing part of our mission and lives.

The first group to form, with the devoted efforts of Father Arthur, is known around campus as the Breakfast Club and is open to those that have completed the Spiritual Exercises. For 10 years or so, the Breakfast Club has met regularly during the fall and spring semesters. The group meets every two weeks at 8:00 a.m. to discuss various aspects and issues connected to the Spiritual Exercises and Ignatian spirituality. Over the years, there have been many areas of dialogue, including discussion of the documents of the 34th Congregation of the Society of Jesus, papal documents and spiritual books and articles. The size and membership of the Breakfast Club has changed markedly, but even when there was only a handful of participants on a regular basis, the group continued to be an important part of the members' spiritual lives. Presently a

growing Breakfast Club is discussing topics from Kathy Coffey's work, *God in the Moment: Making Every Day a Prayer*.

Some years ago, Father Bill LaCroix organized, and continues to conduct, the God in Everyday Life discussion group, which is structured to read and discuss books chosen each academic year. Reflection on deeply spiritual writings has been a consistent theme over time. *Weeds Among the Wheat*, by Thomas H. Green, S.J., Gustavo Gutierrez's work *On Job, Story of a Soul*, the autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux, writings of Dorothy Day, and the Simone Weil Reader, are spiritual readings that the group has discussed through the years. The membership has now grown to the point that this year there are two groups meeting with Father LaCroix every other week.

For further information on the Breakfast Club, contact Jim Maloney at jmal@rctie.org. Father Bill LaCroix is the person to get in touch with for further information on the God in Everyday Life discussion group. Father Jack Callahan, Office of Mission and Values, is the contact person for interest in various modes of the Spiritual Exercises.

Jerry Miller

Book Review

The Challenge and Promise of a Catholic University. Hesburgh, T.M (Ed.) Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, paperback, 381pp., ISBN 0-268-00803-5, \$17.50

Hesburgh, Emeritus President of Notre Dame, solicited reactions from selected faculty at Notre Dame to the question posed by the title of this book. The book's preface sketches a brief history of the "birth and rebirth" of Catholic institutions of higher learning in the United States. Hesburgh's lead essay introduces the general theme of the "challenge and promise of a Catholic University" and concludes with an invitation to faculty to respond to the question from their own perspectives. The 30 faculty respondents represent diverse disciplines ranging from theology to electrical engineering, English to law and business. Respondents include both Catholic and non-Catholic faculty. The stated purpose of the book was to advance the wider discussion of the nature of the Catholic university in our times. "This is in the best tradition of the university – where scholars can disagree without being disagreeable, where the ultimate objective is truth" (p. xiv).

One essay, written by a Baptist philosophy professor, describes his positive experiences working in the environment of a community where discovery of new knowledge and transmission of knowledge takes place within a "worldview of traditional Christian theism" (p. 226). He identifies four fundamental dimensions of the human experience that a Catholic university respects and nurtures: the intellectual, aesthetic, moral and spiritual. Since these foundational dimensions are shared by Catholics and non-Catholics, he concludes that it is possible for a Catholic university to welcome and respect non-Catholic faculty.

In the opening paragraph of her essay entitled "Diversity and Change: A View from the Margin," another contributor describes herself as a "Roman Catholic feminist, female, full professor of psychology" (p. 199). She broaches the topic of being a marginalized person – i.e., a

woman – in a Catholic university and argues that a faculty member’s contributions to the University community should be judged realistically on their substance rather than politically on their source. She specifically discusses the changing roles of men and women in the church, both in the university and as students. A recurring point of her essay – and of the book as a whole – is best illustrated with a quote: “the academy may be the only place where such conversations can occur without a preconceived notion of how they should be resolved” (p. 206).

The content of this book provides a wonderful illustration of the purpose of the Thomas More Center for the Study of Catholic Thought and Culture here at Rockhurst. Both this book and our center encourage and provide an arena for discussion of Catholic faith and reason in our modern world.

Donna Calvert

Course Calendar

HU4001 Catholic Studies: Special Topics
CATHOLIC BIOGRAPHIES

Spring 2001
Th 2-3:00 p.m, Conway 206
1 credit hour

- Jan. 11 – Introduction (Dr. R. Janet, dept. of history)
- Jan. 18 – St. Paul (Dr. Wilburn Stancil, dept. of theology)
- Jan. 25 – St. Augustine (Dr. Daniel Stramara, dept. of theology)
- Feb. 1 – St. Benedict (Sr. Judith Sutera, Mount St. Scholastica Abbey)
- Feb. 8 – Pope St. Gregory I (Fr. Paul Turner, pastor- St. John Francis Regis)
- Feb. 15 – St. Thomas Aquinas (Dr. Curtis Hancock, dept. of philosophy)
- Feb. 22 – Erasmus and More (Dr. Charles Kovich, dept. of English)
- Mar. 1 – St. Ignatius (Fr. Jack Callahan, Mission and Values)
- Mar. 8 – SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS
- Mar. 15 – Palestrina (Dr. Tim McDonald, dept. of comm/fine arts)
- Mar. 22 – St. Therese of Lisieux (Dr. Katie Madigan, dept. of languages)
- Mar. 29 – Thomas Merton (Dr. Craig Prentiss, dept. of theology)
- Apr. 5 – Frank Sheed and Maisie Ward (Fr. Robert Mahoney, dept. of sociology)
- Apr. 12 – HOLY THURSDAY, NO CLASS

Apr. 19 – Dorothy Day (Dr. Gerald Miller, dept. of economics)

Apr. 26 – Conclusion (Dr. R. Janet, dept. of history)