



INITIATIVE REPORT

CATHOLIC COMMON GROUND INITIATIVE

April 2010

New Home, New Opportunities

On Saturday, November 14, the Catholic Common Ground Initiative (CCGI), founded by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin in 1996 just months before his death, moved to the Bernardin Center for Theology and Ministry of Catholic Theological Union at Chicago (CTU). The date marked the thirteenth anniversary of the Cardinal's death.

Cardinal Francis George described the Initiative, formerly housed by the National Pastoral Life Center in New York, as "coming home to Chicago," the late Cardinal's archdiocese. "The Initiative is not a forum for negotiating Catholic doctrine but a means to review the challenges to understanding and living our faith in the constantly changing circumstances," added Cardinal George. The Bernardin Center with its rich history and experience of working to build bridges will provide the Catholic Common Ground Initiative with new resources and opportunities.

The Catholic Common Ground Initiative was founded in an effort to lessen polarities and divisions that weaken the communion of the Church. At the origin of the Initiative, the National Pastoral Life Center released a charter statement, "Called to Be Catholic," proposing guidelines for dialogue within the Church.

The Initiative begun thirteen years ago by Cardinal Bernardin continues today. Through lectures, conferences, and programs in Catholic parishes, schools, and organizations, the Catholic Common Ground Initiative promotes dialogue within the Church on a variety of theological and social issues, including the

changing roles of women, human sexuality, healthcare reform, and immigration — challenges facing not just the American Catholic Church but the United States as a whole.

In addition to transitioning to the Bernardin Center at CTU, the Initiative will be launching a new strategic plan, "A Living Witness," in order to reaffirm its mission to convene "Catholics with differing views about critical issues in the Church to engage in prayerful dialogue for the sake of building up the communion of the Church." Over the next several years the Initiative will focus on bringing Catholics of diverse perspectives together in dialogue, providing resources for use on many levels within the Church, and engaging younger Catholics.

continued next page



2010 Bernardin Conference

Catholic Common Ground Initiative
June 4, 2010, 7:00 PM,
Renaissance Chicago O'Hare Hotel

Presentation of the Annual Cardinal Bernardin Award to Catherine Patten, R.S.H.M.

A Living Witness: An Inaugural Event

Murnion Lecture Speaker:

Most Rev. Michael J. Warfel,
Bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls/Billings, Montana

Murnion Lecture Respondents:

Lisa Sowle Cahill, PhD,
Professor of Theology, Boston College

Peter Casarella, PhD,
Professor of Catholic Studies, DePaul University

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"The Bernardin Center is honored to take on the leadership for the Catholic Common Ground Initiative. This is an exciting and wonderful opportunity and a natural expansion of our mission," stated Sheila McLaughlin, director of the Bernardin Center for Theology and Ministry. "I look forward to working with Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk of Cincinnati [chair of the National Advisory Committee] and the other members of the Advisory Committee in implementing our new strategic plan."

The Bernardin Center was founded in 1997, with Cardinal Bernardin's endorsement, to undertake initiatives that promote peacemaking, interreligious dialogue, and the consistent ethic of life. The Center provides scholarships for students preparing for ministry, engages in interreligious education and dialogue programs, and provides opportunities for young people contemplating lives dedicated to service within the mission of the Church. The addition of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative will strengthen the Center's commitment to these signature issues and provide a fuller spectrum of opportunities for those seeking to be involved in the life of the Church.

"Given the challenges facing the Church in the United States, good faith efforts to contribute to the unity of the Church are truly needed," said Rev. Donald Senior, C.P., president of Catholic Theological Union. "As a Catholic school of theology, we welcome the Catholic Common Ground Initiative to CTU."



2009 Strategic Plan

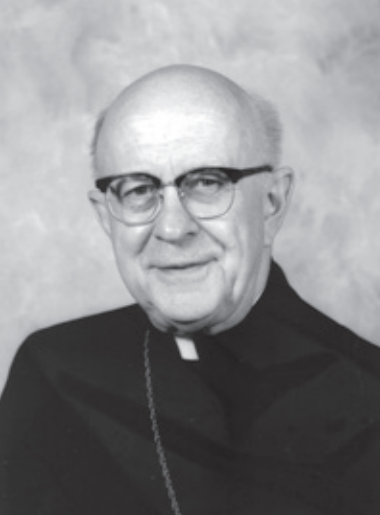
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The preamble to the Catholic Common Ground Initiative strategic plan states:

"The world, and thus the context in which we serve, continues to change...Change often brings stress, diversity of opinion, various perspectives and viewpoints. If not managed well, change can de-energize communities and bring a new divisiveness. Respectful dialogue in the context of prayer engages people with different views to have conversations and exchanges that can lead to greater communion."

In the spirit of renewed commitment, the Initiative has set out goals for the next five years:

1. The Catholic Common Ground Initiative convenes Catholics from diverse communities for prayerful dialogues on critical issues.
2. The Catholic Common Ground Initiative provides resources for national, diocesan, parish, and academic uses.
3. The Catholic Common Ground Initiative engages younger generations in its work.
4. The Catholic Common Ground Initiative collaborates with others in advancing shared purposes.
5. The Catholic Common Ground Initiative adapts its structure, to clarify its responsibilities and relationships.
6. The Catholic Common Ground Initiative is financially viable and sustainable.



Dear Friends:

I write to you at an exciting time for the Catholic Common Ground Initiative: we have a new home, a new strategic plan, and a bright future!

A New Home: As you know, since its inception CCGI was housed at and supported by the National Pastoral Life Center. Monsignor Philip Murnion founded the Center in 1974 and worked very closely with Cardinal Bernardin to launch the Common Ground Initiative in 1996. Without Monsignor Murnion's leadership and the support of the NPLC staff, the Initiative would not have accomplished all that it has.

In June 2009, the CCGI Advisory Committee learned that NPLC was going to close its doors. Fortunately, the Bernardin Center at Catholic Theological Union expressed interest in becoming the new home for CCGI. After discussions with the Initiative's Committee and Father Donald Senior, C.P., president of CTU, we decided to move to the Center. I am sure that CCGI will bring much to the Bernardin Center and that CTU will strengthen the Initiative.

A New Strategic Plan: In June 2008, CCGI began a year-long strategic planning process. Many of you contributed to that process. The process was completed in June 2009 when the Advisory Committee approved the plan, "A Living Witness," that is described on page two of this newsletter. The Committee is confident that with our new strategic goals and the resources of the Bernardin Center we are ready to open a new chapter in the life of the Initiative.

A Bright Future: Because of our confidence that the Initiative can and should contribute to strengthening the pastoral life of the Church in the United States, with this newsletter we are launching a campaign designed to secure the financial future of the Initiative. As was the case at NPLC, so too at CTU, the Initiative must be financially self sufficient. In other words, we depend on the support of donors and foundations to realize our strategic plan.

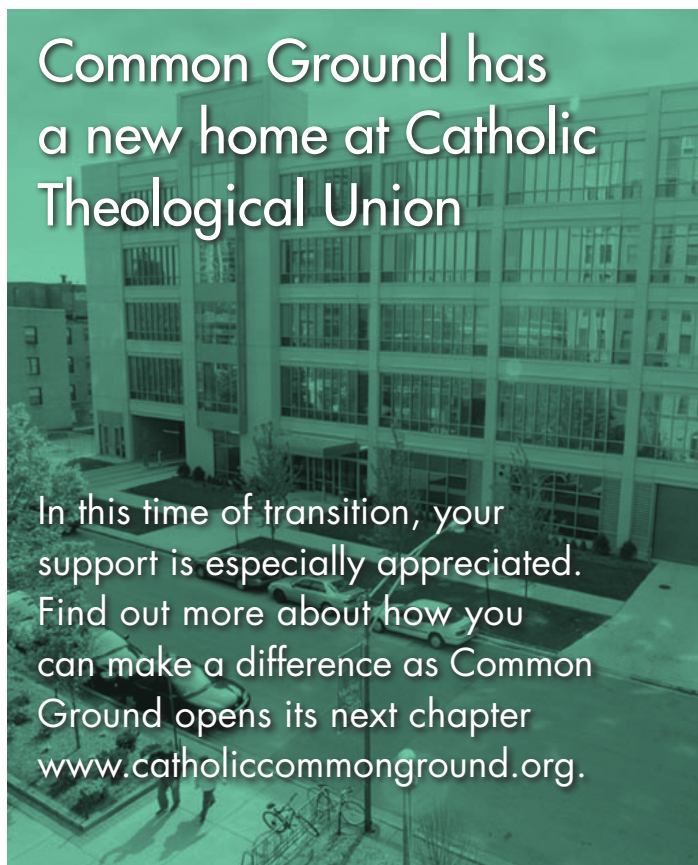
If you believe in the vision of Common Ground that Cardinal Bernardin offered the Church, then I ask you to become a "Friend of Common Ground." With your support and the leadership of Father Senior and Bernardin Center director, Ms. Sheila McLaughlin, the Advisory Committee believes that there is much that we can do to strengthen the bonds of unity in the Church.

Yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Daniel E Pilarczyk
Chair, CCGI Advisory Committee

Common Ground has a new home at Catholic Theological Union

In this time of transition, your support is especially appreciated. Find out more about how you can make a difference as Common Ground opens its next chapter www.catholiccommonground.org.



About the Bernardin Center

The Bernardin Center for Theology and Ministry is dedicated to initiatives that promote peacemaking, interreligious dialogue, and the consistent ethic of life. The Center provides scholarships, promotes interreligious education and dialogue programs, and creates opportunities for young people preparing for lives and careers dedicated to service within the mission of the Church.

The
Bernardin
Center for Theology and Ministry

Catholic Common Ground Initiative Advisory Committee

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Cincinnati, OH

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Newton, MA

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