



INITIATIVE REPORT

CATHOLIC COMMON GROUND INITIATIVE

May 2015

Announcing the 2015 Bernardin Award and Murnion Lecture

CCGI is pleased to announce the Bernardin Award and Murnion Lecture will be held on June 26, 2015, at 7 p.m. Dr. Carolyn Woo, President and CEO of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), will receive this year's Bernardin Award and Rev. Bryan Massingale, STD, will present the lecture, titled "Is Common Ground Possible in the Pursuit of Racial Justice?"



Dr. Carolyn Woo, President & CEO of Catholic Relief Services

Dr. Carolyn Woo was featured in *Foreign Policy* (May/June 2013) as one of the 500 Most Powerful People on the Planet as a "force for good." Prior to her work at CRS, Dr. Woo served from 1997 to 2011 as dean of the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business.



Rev. Bryan Massingale, Professor of Theological Ethics at Marquette University

Rev. Bryan Massingale, Professor of Theological Ethics at Marquette University, specializes in social ethics with a focus on the impact of religious faith as both an instrument of social justice and a catalyst for social transformation. He is the author of *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Orbis, 2010). His current research projects explore the contribution of Black religious radicalism to Catholic Theology; the notion of "cultural sin" and its challenge to Catholic theological ethics; and the intersections of race and sexuality in both social life and Catholicism.

About the Murnion Lecture:

Is Common Ground Possible in the Pursuit of Racial Justice?

The recent killings of unarmed African Americans has put the nation's unfinished quest for racial equality at the forefront of public debate. Yet these discussions are often racially polarized, and Catholic engagement with these discussions presents a muddled and muted witness. This lecture examines the challenges of and possibilities for robust Catholic witness in overcoming our nation's most enduring social divide.

To register for this event, visit catholiccommonground.org.

2015 Spring Lecture

The CCGI Spring Lecture was held on March 19, 2015, and began with an evening prayer. Kevin Glauber Ahern, PhD, shared his presentation entitled *Toward a Vibrant Church: The Ecclesial Visions of Cardinal Bernardin and Pope Francis*, and the evening concluded with time for dialogue.



Dannis Matteson, CCGI staff, Kevin Ahern, PhD, CCGI Advisory Committee Member, Sheila McLaughlin, Director of the Bernardin Center, Fr. Michael Place, CCGI Advisory Committee Member

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Excerpts from the 2015 Spring Lecture:

Identifying four marks of a vibrant church, Kevin Ahern claims that “Here, both Cardinal Bernardin and Pope Francis offer challenging ecclesial visions that call us to transform our global reality.”

These four marks include:

First, a vibrant church is an evangelizing church. Both Pope Francis and Bernardin insist on the centrality of evangelization to the Church’s life and structure. To evangelize means to share the good news and teachings of Jesus Christ in the world. The Gospel, as Francis reminds us, is fundamentally about the Kingdom of God, God’s reign, which has already begun in history (Cf. Mk. 1:15). ‘The kingdom is here, Francis writes, “it returns, it struggles to flourish anew. Christ’s resurrection everywhere calls forth seeds of that new world; even if they are cut back, they grow again, for the resurrection is already secretly woven into the fabric of this history, for Jesus did not rise in vain.”’ ...

“A vibrant church needs an approach to evangelization that is filled with joy, peace, and zeal for the Kingdom of God. We cannot evangelize, to quote Pope Francis, if we are ‘disillusioned pessimists, sourpusses’”....

“... both Francis and Bernardin challenge the church to adopt a holistic approach to evangelization that takes seriously the social and the spiritual demands of proclaiming the Gospel. In short, a vibrant church is a church that evangelizes by prophetically witnessing to the totality of the Kingdom of God, in both its social and spiritual content...

“Second, a vibrant church is an enlivening church. It is a community that is alive in the presence of the Holy Spirit who empowers the people of God to active participation in both the church and in the world. It is a community that is continually nourished and supported by Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

“Bernardin described his dream of the parish as ‘a

faith community where a new spring is ushered in so that new life can burst forth.’ This vision can also be applied to the church as a whole—a global community where new energy bursts forth in all sorts of ways from the creation of a local ministry for unemployed youth to advocacy efforts on behalf of Syrian refugees at the United Nations.

“At its best, the Catholic Church is a life giving community....

“For many others, the experience of the Catholic Church can also be life saving. For example, Cardinal Bernardin was a major champion of Catholic healthcare, which he believed was a concrete way for the church to live out its mission.... These are all signs of what a vibrant church looks like....

“What prevents us from becoming such a community? ...In a consumer culture, it is not uncommon for the church to be seen as a service provider, more like a sacramental Wal-Mart than a community of believers alive in the Spirit....

“Like consumerism, clericalism also reduces the majority of Catholics to passive objects rather than active protagonists....

“In sum, a vibrant church is an enlivening church. It is a church full of creative initiatives and communities that burst forth into the world. A living church is a church where all members, empowered by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and sustained by the Eucharist, recognize themselves as active participants in the people of God. To paraphrase the Epistle of St. James, a church without active protagonists is dead (Cf. Js 2:26).

“Third, a vibrant church is an encompassing church. It is a movement, which assisted by God’s grace, unites a range of communities across time and space into one family, one body comprising of many different parts (Cf. 1 Cor. 12: 12-14)....

“Maintaining this unity in diversity, however, is not easy, particularly in a global culture that thrives on ideological polarization....

“For the late cardinal, ideological polarizations within the people of God, particularly when they are coopted by political and economic interests, are a serious threat to the vitality of the church. Polarization, he taught, ‘strikes at the very heart of the Church as a communion.... We cannot afford to allow the vitality of the Church to be further sapped’ by extreme positions....

“But how do we address polarizations within the church? We cannot do it by imposing one model. As both Francis and Bernardin have made clear, ecclesial unity is not uniformity. Rather unity is found in dialogue, encounter, and hospitality to the so-called ‘other.’...

“A vital church, then, is an encompassing church. It is a community of welcome, encounter, and dialogue that gathers together people of different cultures, perspectives, and ages to the same banquet table. It is the church that we pray for when we sing the song All Our Welcome by Marty Haugen, a song that opened the installation Mass of Archbishop Blase Cupich.

“Last, but not least, a vibrant church is a Eucharistic church.... The Eucharist, as Bernardin writes, is the ‘lifeblood of the Church.’ It is ‘a sign of and an initial participation in the heavenly banquet where we will be in total communion with God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.’...

“Vatican II, as we know, describes the Eucharist as both the ‘source and summit of Christian life.’ Again, we see here the power of the Catholic ‘and’— source and summit; fidelity and dialogue; horizontal and vertical; mission and institution; faith and action; unity and diversity; charity and justice, etc. ...

“In sum, a vibrant church is a Eucharist church actively engaged in the world. It is a community of believers who are regularly nourished by their ongoing participation in the Paschal Mystery and who offer their lives to God in loving service....

To end his lecture, Kevin Ahern identifies three areas of church life that need revitalization for the church to become vibrant. These include parishes, movements and organizations, and frontline ministries. To conclude, Kevin Ahern remarks:

“As we move toward the second half of the Post-Vatican II century, there are many changes on the horizon for the church and Church communities



Kevin Glauber Ahern, PhD, speaker at CCGI Spring Lecture

around the world. It is not clear what the church will look like in fifty years, but it is clear that it will not look the same as it does now. As we seek to navigate these changing realities, the prophetic wisdom of Cardinal Bernardin and Pope Francis can assist us as we seek to become what we are called to be, a vibrant church alive in the Spirit and responsive to the needs of God’s creation and, in particular, the poor and the marginalized.”

Remembering Cardinal George



As the Church of Chicago mourns the loss of Francis Cardinal George, we give thanks for his ongoing support of the Bernardin Center. Here, he addresses high school students in our Peacebuilders Program.

Space Made Holy: A Blog for Ministers

Retired Archbishop and founding member of CCGI, Oscar Lipscomb, in his 1997 address entitled, "A Labor of Love," describes the efforts of Common Ground as a service that extends beyond theological discourse, fostering dialogue in communities on the ground. He remarks, "If the common ground that we seek in our Initiative is truly grace-filled ground, then we and our critics will have nothing to fear. Ours will be not an experience of mere theological discourse but truly a labor of love in service to God's truth. A labor that, by His blessing and our efforts, is conducted in space made holy."

In an effort to build upon our well-established theological discourse that currently takes place at CCGI, we have created a blog, Space Made Holy, to meet the needs of communities facing the challenge of dialogue on the ground. We acknowledge that each ministry, from parish work to social advocacy, comes with its own challenges in forging effective dialogue among co-workers, with those being served, and in connecting with other area ministries. Therefore, Space Made Holy targets

those working on the front lines of ministry. We envision the blog to be a space for people to reflect on common ground as it relates to their particular ministries.

We are seeking contributors for our blog—ministers who would like to share reflections on the work they have done to foster dialogue in their work for the church. Please visit our blog, SpaceMadeHoly.blogspot.com and email our blog Editor, Dannis Matteson, dmatteson@ctu.edu, with your ideas for potential contributions.

CCGI is pleased to welcome these new advisory committee members:

Most Rev. Timothy L. Doherty
*Bishop of the Diocese of
Lafayette-in-Indiana*
Lafayette, IN

Most Rev. Gerald Kicanas, DD
Bishop of Tucson
Tucson, AZ

Most Rev. Martin D. Holley
*Auxiliary Bishop of the
Archdiocese of Washington*
Washington, DC

Most Rev. John Michael
Botean, DD
*Bishop of the Eparchy of
St. George in Canton*
Canton, OH

Dr. Regina Wentzel Wolfe
*Associate Professor of Catholic
Theological Ethics, Catholic
Theological Union*
Chicago, IL

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