CCGI Honors Rev. J. Bryan Hehir with its 2011 Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Award

Each year the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, in conjunction with the Murnion Lecture, presents the Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Award to a Catholic whose life and service reflect the values and mission of the Initiative. This past June, Father J. Bryan Hehir, a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston and one of the most distinguished and effective Catholic voices in the American public square, was the tenth recipient of the Bernardin Award.

Bishop Daniel Pilarczyk, the Initiative’s advisory committee chair, presented Father Hehir with the award and shared with those gathered to honor him these remarks:

“Never one to back away from a thorny issue or a controversial topic, Father Hehir always exemplifies the principles of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative in his framing of issues and his dealings with opposing viewpoints and opinions. He was a trusted advisor of Cardinal Bernardin, not only in the inception of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, but also in the development of the 1983 Pastoral on War and Peace and the ground breaking work on the consistent ethic of life.

Father Hehir is always first and foremost the priest with a deep pastoral concern for each individual. Prestigious and wide-reaching though his company and accomplishments may be, Father Hehir is a priest whose heart is always in the parish, in the pulpit and at the altar.”

Father Hehir, in accepting the award, shared these words:

“I think the significance of the award is captured perhaps in the answer to two questions. Whence does it come, and to whom is it dedicated? The significance of the award is not the persons who receive it, (rather) it is the way in which the award reminds us all of what the initial animating vision of the Common Ground Initiative was: a vision that was the project of many people, some of them in this hall tonight and associated with it from the beginning. But at the heart of the many people who developed this vision there always stood Joseph Bernardin, his conception of the life of the Church, his conviction that the Church should be in the midst of the world to remind us of the document of Vatican II, The Church in the World. And the award in a sense mandates us to continue the original inspiring vision. The Cardinal was worried about polarization in the life of the Church and he sought to create a center around which the Church could gather. A realist, if there ever was one, Cardinal Bernardin had no illusions that that meant everyone would do the same thing, sing the same song, walk the same road. But he did believe that you could walk more than one road and stay within the capacious framework of the Catholic vision of life.”
This year's Murnion Lecture, entitled “Communion Across Generations,” was given by Sister Patricia Wittberg, S.C., noted sociologist and professor at Indiana University. Her presentation described the “cultures” of the various generations and cohorts in the U.S. Catholic Church. The particular focus was on young people, those characterized as Millennials and Generation X and their characteristics and values. In her talk, Sister Patricia described how each generation is its own culture – a specific way of looking at the world, a set of unquestioned assumptions, values, ways of talking, material artifacts such as dress, communication devices, etc. We can think of generational cultures as similar to ethnic cultures such as the cultures of African Americans, Latinos, or Appalachian whites. She argued that just as there are workshops to help Church people become more sensitive to the
cultures of various ethnic groups – to learn their language, to appreciate their values, to look at American society through their eyes – so must the Church make similar efforts to learn about generational cultures.

She is convinced that in order for Catholic Millennials and Gen Xers to lead the Church to new unity and reconciliation that is a source of life for the Church in the future, they need the help of those in the Church who are older, who soon will be passing the leadership on to them. To do this, she suggested that parishes and religious communities arrange regular times and places where the various generations can engage in the kind of story-telling they need in order to understand each other, and that Gen X and Millennial Catholics should be given positions of leadership and responsibility in parishes and religious institutes.

Catholic Common Ground Advisory Committee Meeting

On June 11 and 12, 2011 the Catholic Common Ground Advisory Committee met in conjunction with the 2011 Murnion Lecture and Bernardin Award. In addition to electing a new Chair, the Committee discussed the ongoing implementation of its strategic plan, A Living Witness. At the present time our work is focused on engaging young people, and exploring methods for ensuring the financial viability and sustainability of the Initiative. The committee decided that the June 2012 Murnion Lecture and Bernardin Award events would take place in Washington, D.C. next June.

Catholic Common Ground Initiative Advisory Committee

CHAIR
Most Rev. Michael Warfel
Bishop of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings

MEMBERS
Mr. Kevin Ahern
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, MA

Dr. Lisa Sowle Cahill
Boston College
Chestnut Hill, MA

Mr. Paul Covino
College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, MA

Mr. Peter Denio
National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management
Washington, DC

Sr. Kathleen Dolphin, P.B.V.M.
St. Mary’s College
Center for Spirituality
Notre Dame, IN

Sr. Sharon A. Euart, R.S.M.
Canon Law Society of America
Silver Spring, MD

Sr. Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M.
Catholic Healthcare Partners
Cincinnati, OH

Most Rev. Wilton D. Gregory
Archbishop of Atlanta
Atlanta, GA

Dr. Diana Hayes
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

Mr. Jerome Hickey
Dearborn Partners LLC
Chicago, IL

Sr. Mary Johnson, SNDdeN
Emmanuel College
Boston, MA

Rev. Ronald Lewinski
St. Mary of the Annunciation Church
Mundelein, IL

Most Rev. Oscar H. Lipscomb
Archbishop Emeritus of Mobile
Mobile, AL

Most Rev. Patrick J. McGrath
Bishop of the Diocese of San Jose
Santa Jose, CA

Sr. Sheila McLaughlin
Catholic Theological Union
Chicago, IL

Mr. Brian Murphy
Latz & Wall Consulting
Chicago, IL

Mr. Daniel R. Murray, Esq.
Jenner & Block LLP
Chicago, IL

Mr. Thomas O’Donnell, Esq.
Bates, MA

Rev. Michael D. Place
Catholic Health Association
Chicago, IL

Most Rev. Ricardo Ramirez, C.S.B.
Bishop of the Diocese of Las Cruces
Las Cruces, NM

Sr. Katarina Schuth, O.S.F.
St. Paul Seminary School
St. Paul, MN

Mr. Gerald Shea
AFL-CIO
Washington, DC

Rev. Msgr. Dennis F. Sheehan
Our Lady Help of Christians
Newton, MA

Rev. Msgr. John Strynkowski
St. James Cathedral Basilica
Brooklyn, NY

Ms. Amy Uelmen, Esq.
Fordham Univ. School of Law
New York, NY

Rev. Reginald Whitt, O.P.
University of St. Thomas School of Law
Minneapolis, MN

Most Rev. Gabino Zavala
Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

2012 Cardinal Bernardin Conference

“Ecclesial Communion in Light of Generational Diversity”

Utilizing the Catholic Common Ground Initiative principles for ecclesial dialogue, the 2012 Cardinal Bernardin Conference will explore what can be done to enhance a vibrant sense of ecclesial communion that celebrates intra and inter generational diversity and unity. The Conference will ask how individually and collectively we can hold together and promote the life and mission of the Church.

March 2-4, 2012
University of St. Mary of the Lake
Mundelein, Illinois

As Those Who Serve Award

On October 5, 2011 the Catholic Common Ground Initiative will give the first “As Those Who Serve” awards to three exemplary Catholics in the Chicago area who embody Cardinal Bernardin’s commitment to strengthening the bonds of ecclesial communion. Out of gratitude for their dedication to this important mission within the Church, the Initiative will recognize and thank Sr. Mary Brian Costello, R.S.M., Mr. Lou Glunz, and Mr. Jimmy Lago for their unswerving efforts in building communion in the Church.
Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk, who for eight years provided remarkable service as Chair of the Catholic Common Ground Advisory Committee has retired from that position. The Archbishop was one of the first persons Cardinal Bernardin asked to join the Advisory Committee, when the Initiative was launched. Archbishop Pilarczyk is a nationally prominent churchman, educator, and author of more than a dozen books about Catholic themes. His service to the American church includes terms as vice president and president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Committee presented the Archbishop with a small token of its appreciation for his dedicated leadership and wished him well in his many retirement activities.

Bishop Michael Warfel of the Diocese of Great Falls/Billings, Montana was elected the new chair of the Advisory Committee of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative. Bishop Warfel was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Anchorage, Alaska in 1980, and served as the Bishop of the Diocese of Juneau from 1996-2007. In addition to his work with the CCGI, he is Chair of the Bishop’s subcommittee for Catholic Home Missions.