

<h1 style="color: green;">Initiatives</h1> <p style="color: green;">In Support of Christians in the World</p>	<p>National Center for the Laity PO Box 291102 Chicago, IL 60629 www.catholiclabor.org http://twitter.com/InitiativesNcl</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">May 2021 Number 258</p>
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Covid-19

The pandemic puts several words and terms into popular use, including *quarantine*, *take-out only*, *mitigation* and *distancing*. *Essential worker* is another.

Since March 2020 essential workers have been praised at civic functions, highlighted in magazines, prayed for in churches and applauded during neighborhood rituals. Among those essential workers are delivery drivers and warehouse staff. They allow households to function without shopping in crowded stores.

Half of all online purchases during Covid-19 are transacted through Amazon, writes Vauhini Vara in a review of *Fulfillment: Winning and Losing in One-Click America* by Alec MacGillis (Farrar, Straus [2021]; \$28). The company has hired as many as 1,400 per day during the pandemic. It is the second largest private U.S. employer, next to Walmart. So far about 20,000 Amazon employees tested positive for Covid-19. (*The Atlantic* [3/21], 600 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20037)

In November 2020 workers at Amazon Fulfillment Center (975 Powder Plant Rd., Bessemer, AL 35022) petitioned for union representation through Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Clerks (370 Seventh Ave. #501, New York, NY 10001; www.bamazonunion.org). Their concerns are safety (related to Covid-19 and general conditions in the warehouse), scheduling (family/job tradeoffs), qualifying for health care benefits, productivity quotas, surveillance and respectful supervision. Just before Christmas the parties agreed on what category of worker is entitled to vote. Since then management twice objected to voting by mail. Yet the process proceeds; judges count ballots beginning March 30, 2021.

The first U.S. attempt at an Amazon union was in 2014 among a small number of Delaware technicians. They eventually voted against a union. Then in 2018 there was a drive at a Staten Island facility. It did not reach the voting stage. Amazon management was faulted

for illegal retaliation. (*N.Y. Times*, 3/21/19 & 12/23/20 & 1/25, 2/18, 2/21, & 3/1/21)

Awood Center (2511 E. Franklin Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55406; www.awoodcenter.org), founded in 2017, is a mix of social service with community organizing strategies. Awood, whose members are mostly East African immigrants, was the first group in the U.S. to successfully negotiate with Amazon, though it is not and cannot be a union. Their issues are productivity rates, no time to use the washroom, surveillance and arbitrary firings. Awood continues to lobby Amazon on safety, religious liberty and other concerns. (*N.Y. Times*, 5/9/19 & *Chicago Sun Times*, 12/1/20 & *Union Advocate* [2/19], 353 W. Seventh St. #201, St. Paul, MN 55102)

In dealing with Covid-19, nurses are using their unions to address challenges. A few new bargaining units have organized. An estimated 3,300 nurses and other health care workers have died from Covid-19. The union members (and plenty of non-union nurses) want additional staff plus more and better protective equipment, including N95 masks. Of course, no nurse ever expects a cushy workday. They do, however, want respect.

Among the unions pushing for improvements are Service Employees International (1800 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036), National Nurses United (8455 Colesville Rd. #1100, Silver Spring, MD 20910) and Illinois Nurses Association (910 W. Van Buren St. #502, Chicago, IL 60607), which held a brief strike at a Chicago hospital last year to focus on safety. (*N.Y. Times*, 1/30/21 & *In These Times* [12/20], 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647)

When Covid-19 is sufficiently crushed, NCL prays that the esteem for workers continues and that many others routinely receive sincere gratitude--mechanical engineers, homemakers, bank tellers, journalists, judges, students, ministers, legislators, insurance agents, musicians and more. We are all essential.

Taking the Initiative

In Finance

On May 1, 2019, feast of St. Joseph the Worker, Pope Francis sent an invitation to those young adult economists, entrepreneurs and change makers interested in creating a life-giving, humane, inclusive economy that cares for the environment. He proposed a March 2020 gathering in Assisi, Italy. He called the project The Economy of Francesco (Viale Guglielmo, Marconi 6, Assisi PG 06081 Italy; www.francescoeconomy.org), putting it under the patronage of St. Francis Assisi (1181-1226). Pope Francis thinks St. Francis' renunciation of worldly wealth and status in favor of voluntary poverty, love of creation, and embrace of all humanity especially the poor can inspire a vision for leaving aside the old economy in favor of a new one. (*Vatican News* [5/11/19]; www.vaticannews.va & *The Catholic Spirit* of St. Paul, 3/26/20)

Alas, Covid-19 disrupted plans. However, the rescheduled meeting was held November 17-19, 2020, albeit in a virtual format. During the delay about 2,000 young adults from across the world met in cyberspace, breaking into 12 thematic villages to focus on aspects of the new economy. The villages included Management and Gift, Finance and Humanity, Work and Care, Agriculture and Justice, Energy and Poverty, Business and Peace, Women for Economy, CO2 of Inequalities, Vocation and Profit, Businesses in Transition, Life and Lifestyle, and Policies and Happiness. The 35-and-under adults discussed topics and planned projects, ranging from forming local business models, nonprofits, and legislation to international research communities, dialogue, and campaigns. These groups had spirited discussions and happy hours.

During the November 2020 event each thematic village hosted a webinar with titles like "Perfecting Joy: Three Proposals," "Peace Economics and Industrial Reconversion," "Artificial Intelligence: How to Address Socio-Economic Inequality," "We are all Developing Countries," and others.

Interspersed through the event were theatrical and artistic exhibitions including *The Return of the Little Prince* as well as reflections on St. Francis.

While St. Francis is an inspiration for the Economy of Francesco project, Pope Francis makes it clear that young adults are not to

remove themselves from the world, from centers of decision making. They are "called to have a concrete impact on cities and universities, workplaces and unions, businesses and movements, public and private offices and to work with intelligence, commitment and conviction in order to reach the centers where ideas and paradigms are developed and decided," our pope insists. Do not be afraid to "get involved and touch the soul of your cities with the gaze of Jesus," and "to enter courageously the conflicts and crossroads of history to anoint them with the fragrance of the Beatitudes." (*Origins* [12/10/20], 3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20027 & *Catholic Spirit* of Austin, 12/20)

As the pope suggests, the Economy of Francesco project does not end with the 2020 event. Many of the villages continue to meet. Their participants are from all parts of the globe. For instance, one village is crafting legislation to assist migrants in Brazil.

Economy of Francesco is a living event. Anyone can host their own local discussion with the intention of bearing fruit in their community. A parish or a diocesan region can imitate the pope. There is no rule about starting with economists. Certainly in these days a local effort for young adult health care providers or service workers would be beneficial.

Taking the Initiative

In Economics

In the widely read *Small Is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (Harper Perennial [1973]; \$16.99), British-German economist E.F. Schumacher (1911-1977) calls for an economy based on appropriateness of scale. Despite the book's title, his interest is not in smallness, per se, but in "intermediate technology." By this he means equipment and techniques appropriate in size and cost to the needs and conditions of the people using it. It is not enough to strive for efficiency and for reasonably affordable distribution, he writes. Context is crucial.

Schumacher explicitly draws on the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, which states that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent level, always with a view to the common good. Schumacher was also interested in an appropriate society--one that maintains a scale and size that

allows for initiative and freedom on its lower levels.

“Since there is now increasing evidence of environmental deterioration, particularly in living nature,” Schumacher stated almost 50 years ago, “the entire outlook and methodology of economics is being called into question.” He argues that economics requires a framework beyond itself, one acknowledging our dependence on the natural world and giving priority to matters of human dignity, meaning and wellbeing. He specifically points to the great wisdom traditions as sources of guidance. His own personal and professional explorations led Schumacher to join the Catholic Church at the time of writing *Small Is Beautiful*.

Today’s presumption is that something that can be done should be done. This is especially true in software design, in its content and its distribution. It is likewise true in natural resource acquisition and use, in finance schemes, in building construction and lots more. Yet *growth no matter what* creates a world of increasing inequities. It would be misleading to think that Schumacher was against all growth. The principle of subsidiarity affirms the often necessary role of big business and big government. But the principle insists on *no bigger than necessary*. Products and services match real needs, they cause minimal harm to local cultures and, whenever possible, are delivered through local institutions.

Schumacher’s humane synthesis of economic theory and traditional wisdom still percolates. From Pope Francis to “less is more” economists, there are urgent calls for a system in which people and the planet matter more than unbridled production, consumption and accumulation of wealth. These prophets echo Schumacher’s assertion that “we [are] very rapidly using up a certain kind of irreplaceable capital asset, namely the *tolerance margins* which benign nature always provides.” The only viable economics is one that considers the broader framework of justice, harmony, beauty, health and sustainability. We must have “a new life-style, with new methods of production and consumption: a lifestyle designed for permanence.”

Wendell Berry is another prophet who critiques limitless growth. “We have founded our present society upon delusional assumptions of limitlessness...the fantastical possibility of limitless growth, limitless wants, limitless wealth, limitless natural resources, limitless energy, and limitless debt,” he writes. Such a

culture fails to appreciate that we are limited creatures in a limited world and leads to “economic stupidity.” In fact, the “tolerance margins have already been exceeded.” Berry’s moral vision calls for the necessary “self-restraints implied in neighborliness, stewardship, thrift, temperance, generosity, care, kindness, friendship, loyalty, and love.” (“Faustian Economics” in *The World-Ending Fire*, Counterpoint [2017]; \$26.00)

Alexander Zaitchik strikes similar notes in his review of *Less Is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World* by Jason Hickel (Penguin [2021]; \$28.95). Hickel says we need to reduce global consumption and production; to look to *wellbeing*, rather than to GDP as a true indicator of prosperity. Hickel asks: “Growth for whom, and to what ends?” He proposes an economy directed toward the creation of public goods such as mass transit, health care and regenerative agriculture rather than toward the accumulation of private wealth. He acknowledges that this post-growth economy would require sacrifices (mostly high energy consumer goods), but he concludes that it is necessary for the planet’s survival. He additionally describes the many benefits of degrowth as a “beautiful coincidence... What we need to do to survive is the same as what we need to do to have better lives.” (“The Urgent Case for Shrinking the Economy” in *The New Republic* [12/28/20], 1 Union Sq. W., New York, NY 10003)

Taking the Initiative Against Predatory Lenders

Msgr. Jack Egan (1916-2001) of Chicago was trained in specialized Catholic Action with its observe-judge-act method. To explain the *act* stage of the process, Egan routinely quoted Fr. William Ferree, SM (1905-1985): “The unique act of social justice is organization.” (Get *An Alley in Chicago*, a biography of Egan by Margery Frisbie [\$11] and *Church Chicago Style* [\$4], National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629.)

Observe. In 1999 Egan was in the confessional. A woman told him about her \$600 in loans from two payday lenders. The debt was greatly increasing because she missed a payment. (None of this, by the way, qualifies as her sin.) Egan found \$720 to help the woman.

Judge. Egan then did some research. A typical payday customer (adjusted to current figures) earns about \$33,000. They need on

average \$375 for rent or utility bill. Within two weeks of visiting the payday store this person owes \$430 to repay a \$375 loan. In about 80% of cases they extend the loan at higher interest. It can balloon to 297% or even higher in some states. About 25% of borrowers roll the loan over nine or more times and 40% default. A typical borrower goes to the loan shop every 15 months. In his judgment stage Egan also recalled Christian teaching on usury: *Exodus 22:25* and *Summa Theologica, Question 78* by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Act. Egan convened leaders from agencies and advocacy groups. From their deliberation came public awareness efforts and a proposal to the state legislature. At the time of Egan's death, the allowable usury remained.

The group—now called Msgr. Egan Campaign for Payday Loan Reform (Citizen Action, 2229 S. Halsted St., Chicago, IL 60608; www.citizenaction-il.org)--persisted. Earlier this year our state government instituted the Predatory Loan Prevention Act. It caps interest at 36% for loans under \$40,000.

For more on the Illinois Act, contact Brent Adams (Woodstock Institute, 67 E. Madison St. #2108, Chicago, IL 60603; www.woodstockinst.org) and more on the general topic from Center for Responsible Lending (302 W. Main St., Durham, NC 27701; www.responsiblelending.org). (*N.Y. Times*, 7/8/20 & *Chicago Tribune*, 2/27/21 & *Chicago Sun Times*, 3/8/21 & *Chicago Catholic*, 2/21/21 & *Chicago Reader* [2/17/21], 2930 S. Michigan Ave. #102, Chicago, IL 60616)

It doesn't help to scold families for resorting to these loan shops. People still need convenient cash from a source that does not operate on a usurious business model. The challenge is creating and supporting alternatives.

Capital Good Fund (22 A St., Providence, RI 02907; www.capitalgoodfund.org) offers small loans in six states, including Illinois and recently in Texas. Self-Help Federal Credit Union (4800 S. Pulaski Rd., Chicago, IL 60632; www.self-helpfcu.org), to mention only one more example, operates in three states, including nine locations in Chicago.

There are about 130 active faith-based credit unions in the U.S. About 100 of the 130 have a Catholic pedigree. Thirty of those are affiliated with Catholic Credit Union Association (PO Box 7878, Notre Dame, IN 46556; www.notredamefcu.com).

Finance officers at a Chancery honor their fiduciary responsibility. That mandate, in INITIATIVES' opinion, does equate with "highest rate of return on the dollar" to the exclusion of Catholicism's preferential option for the poor. A portion of the money administered by Chancery officials should be invested with a credit union.

Taking the Initiative *In Race Relations*

Chicago was totally taken by the Loyola University Ramblers basketball team (www.loyolaramblers.com) during March Madness 2018. They were 15-3 in their Missouri Valley Conference and then won thrilling games in the NCAA tournament, advancing all the way to the Final Four. Media attention to this remarkable team was the occasion to recall the Ramblers' 1963 NCAA championship team.

The Loyola Project is a new documentary about the 1963 team. It comes from O'Malley Creadon Productions (4550 Kingswell Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90027; www.ocpmedia.com). Lucas Williamson is the film's narrator and co-writer. He was with the team for the 2018 tournament. As a senior he returned to the 2021 Madness. (*Chicago Tribune*, 2/15/21)

In 1963 Loyola won the tournament with a last second basket in overtime against University of Cincinnati Bearcats. This tournament is an important moment in NCAA history, but not because of the 60-58 final score. It's because the Ramblers used four Black starters during the season, violating a gentleman's agreement among coaches to limit the number of Blacks. The Chicago team regularly took abuse from opponents' fans.

In the semi-final round of the 1963 March Madness, Loyola was matched against Mississippi State Bulldogs. Mississippi had to use two airplanes (in case half the team got caught) as they courageously defied segregation, sneaking out of town ahead of a court order prohibiting them from playing an integrated team like Loyola. A photo shows the pre-tip off handshake between a Rambler, Jerry Harkness on the left, and a Bulldog, Joe Dan Gold (1942-2011) on the right. (After beating the Bulldogs, Loyola went on to defeat two more teams before the final against Cincinnati.)

Change occurs. Not fully enough; not quickly enough. But schools, including their

athletic programs, are agents of the new humanity.

suggested that anyone could be art; that the people standing in the darkened room were no less radiant than the people glowing on the walls in front of them.” (*The Atlantic* [12/19], 600 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20037)

Appreciating the beauty that is already there is what Catholicism calls *sacramental imagination*. Art or any endeavor for that matter is not improved by an extra-worldly coating or an overt religious display. NCL is cautious toward workers who “wear religion on their sleeve,” as if the world needs to be additionally sanctified. Art advertised as “Christian,” is a betrayal if it is shallow or sickening sweet. Our God of life, of death on the cross and of resurrection wants art with all its teeth.

“Good art is good precisely because it takes that [human] complexity seriously...[all the] heartaches, breakdowns, interpersonal strife, wondrous mystery and confusing pathos,” writes Fr. Ron Rolheiser OFM. Good art “shines a light on it in a way that doesn’t resolve tension too easily. Poor art is invariably sentimental precisely because it does not take that complexity seriously, either by refusing to acknowledge it or by resolving it too easily.” (*Wrestling With God*, Image Books [2018]; \$22)

Work and Art

During the late 1960s and through the 1970s, Garry Winogrand (1928-1984) defined what it means to be a *street photographer*. He mostly worked in New York City. Later he taught in Chicago, Austin and Los Angeles.

From May 2019 through December 2019, Brooklyn Museum (200 Eastern Pkwy., Brooklyn, NY 11238; www.brooklynmuseum.org) exhibited “more than 400 rarely or never-before seen color photographs” taken from Winogrand’s 35mm slides. In these photographs, says the museum, “Winogrand explored the raw visual poetics of public life—on streets and highways, in suburbs, at motels, theaters, fairgrounds, and amusement parks.” Brooklyn Museum sells a book, *Street Philosophy of Garry Winogrand* (\$60).

A main theme of our National Center for the Laity appears in Leslie Jamison’s review of the Winogrand exhibit.

“These were stunning scenes not because they were extraordinary but because they weren’t,” Jamison writes. “They were full of ordinary people in their beauty... I didn’t think he was making the world more beautiful; I thought he was excavating beauty that was already there. His alchemy didn’t turn the world holy so much as it revealed that the world had been holy all along—outside the doors of the museum, and inside them too, *we* were holy. That was part of the grace of his work, how it

Rest in Peace

John Joseph Patrick Moylan (1928-2021)

Moylan firmly believed that the American dream is available to all those willing to work for it. Immigrant, laborer, servant of God and country, devoted husband for 65 years to Phyllis and doting father to seven; he was everyman and model citizen.

Born the seventh of 12 children of Bridget and John Joe Moylan in Nenagh (Co. Tipperary) Ireland, Moylan arrived in San Francisco from Toronto in 1951 to work in the building trades. A union member for more than 70 years, he was a collaborator with John Henning (1915-2009), the legendary head of the California Labor Federation (600 Grand Ave. #410, Oakland, CA 94610), in the struggle to establish a civil climate “for the dignity of work and the worker.” He was also a champion of Irish-American values and built civic bridges between his old and new homes. As an activist for a better quality of life in the Bay Area, he touched thousands of lives.

Moylan retired in 1992 after serving as president and then business manager of Golden

Gate Lodge of Plasterers and Shophands Local 66 (39 S. Linden, South San Francisco, CA 94080). He represented the City and County of San Francisco multiple times on the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway & Transportation District Board; serving as president in 2007-2008. He also served on the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, on Recreation and Parks Commission and as advisor to the California Air Pollution Control Board. He was co-founder of the San Francisco-Cork (Ireland) Sister City Committee, President of the American-Irish Alliance and founding member and builder of the United Irish Cultural Center. Proud Democrat and activist, he was instrumental in launching the career of Rep. Nancy Pelosi.

A private mass for the family was held on February 8, 2021 at St. Cecilia (2555 17th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94116), his longtime parish church that he helped to build.

Rest in Peace

John Sweeney (1934-2009)

Sweeney, longtime friend of our National Center for the Laity, was president of AFL-CIO (815 16th Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20006; www.aflcio.org) for 14 years, having previously served as president of Service Employees International Union (1800 Massachusetts Ave. NW 20036; www.seiu.org). He was born in the Bronx. His parents were immigrants from Ireland. Sweeney often noted that his father, a union bus driver, was able to save \$5,000 so that the family eventually moved to Yonkers. His mother, however, was a non-union house cleaner whose wages never kept up.

Sweeney went to Iona College (715 North Ave., New Rochelle, NY 10801; www.iona.edu), sponsored by the Christian Brothers (742 Monroe Ave., Elizabeth, NJ 07201; www.ercbna.org). He graduated in 1956 with a degree in economics. The school's motto became his own: "I have fought the good fight." (2 *Timothy* 4:7)

During his senior year at Iona, Sweeney began courses at Xavier Labor School. It was one of over 100 such Catholic labor schools operating in the 1950s. Several, like Xavier, were sponsored by the Jesuits, others by Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, some by a diocese and in Chicago by the independent Catholic Labor Alliance, NCL's predecessor. Sweeney's experience was typical. He took

about eight one-hour classes, four evenings a week under teachers Fr. Phillip Carey, SJ (1907-1989), to whom he remained close, and Fr. John Pete Corridan, SJ (1911-1984). Each course was dedicated to a public skill (parliamentary procedure, collective bargaining, effective speech or labor ethics) and all incorporated Catholic social principles. Xavier taught me "that work is a way we worship," Sweeney later commented. "Through work we share in God's creation. [I learned that] workers have God-given rights; and that there is a moral connection among church, the rights of workers and economic justice." (See *On the Irish Waterfront* by James Fisher, Cornell Press [2009]; \$18.95 and *Go To the Worker: America's Labor Apostles* by Kimball Baker, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$16)

During his tenure as AFL-CIO president, Sweeney spoke to an NCL gathering about "Elements of a Vision of Society Appropriate for Catholic Laity." According to Catholicism, he said, God intends work to be meaningful, a source of self-esteem and public friendship. Work is to be managed in ways that respect dignity. Work is a vocation and part of worship. However, society's "consensus on work has broken down." Sweeney acknowledged that "achievement through individual initiatives is a part of the greatness of our nation." But not, he continued, at the cost of neglecting the "truly wondrous" accomplishments of people working together.

To match God's desire, Sweeney concluded, work must enhance family life. Yet for example, access to health care, "one of the proudest achievements of the U.S. labor movement," is being eroded. He urged NCL to continue its advocacy for "acceptable standards of working conditions." In addressing issues around work and family life "lies the real test of the U.S. Catholic lay community as it emerges into its new role in the church."

Sweeney's memoir is *Looking Back, Looking Forward* (BookBaby [2017]; \$29.50) and his manifesto is *America Needs a Raise* (Houghton Mifflin [1996]). He is survived by wife Maureen and their two children. The family requests memorial donations to Iona.

Happenings

Faith & Co. is a project of Seattle Pacific University (3307 Third Ave. W., Seattle, WA 98119; <https://faithandco.spu.edu>). It produces documentary films about “aligning your work with your faith.” The current film is *Building Relationships*. Its case study is McCoy’s Building Supply (1350 IH 35 N., San Marcos, TX 78666) with its 88 retail outlets. Watch the film on-line. Faith & Co. also offers on-line courses for a certificate or graduate credit. Coming up: “Serving Employees,” “Serving the World” and others.

Issue #137 of *Christian History* (PO Box 540, Worcester, PA 19490; www.christianhistoryinstitute.org) is devoted to “Christianity and the Marketplace.” One article explains that the early church did not make the modern distinction between worthy and undeserving poor. Another deals with Catholic social thought. And David Miller considers the “faith at work” movement. Many of the magazine’s past issues are available.

NCL invokes God’s blessing on Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (475 Riverside Dr. #1842, New York, NY 10115; www.iccr.org), during its 50 year anniversary. ICCR is a sophisticated operation that allows religious institutions and others to responsibly use their stocks by introducing shareholder resolutions at annual corporate meetings, monitoring compliance and more. It counts many successes.

INITIATIVES

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The Working Catholic blog is at www.catholiclabor.org. While in the Catholic Labor Network site, go into *Library* and scroll to NCL for more information about us. Also find NCL on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/InitiativesNcl>.

NCL is an independent 501-C-3 Catholic organization with an Illinois charter. Please consider a donation toward NCL’s 2021 budget. See page eight.

NCL’s board includes Charles DiSalvo, Ambrose Donnelly, Tom Donnelly, Bill Droel, Adam Fitzpatrick, John Hazard and Lauren Sukal.

“We need to move beyond this idea that the work of the caregiver for her relative or a full-time mother or volunteer in a social project is not work because it pays no wages... We have it the wrong way around... Our work is the basic condition of our dignity and well-being. Labor is not the exclusive privilege of the employed or the employers, but a right and duty for all men and women.” –Pope Francis in *Let Us Dream* (Simon & Schuster, 2020; \$26)