

<h1 style="color: green;">Initiatives</h1> <p style="color: green;">In Support of Christians in the World</p>	National Center for the Laity PO Box 291102 Chicago, IL 60629 <a href="http://www.catholiclabor.org">www.catholiclabor.org</a>	<b>December 2021 Number 262</b>
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## Laity at Work

Christendom was once the preferred model of Catholic-society relations. It made minimal distinction between Church officials and rulers. Each borrowed from the other. Each had similar hierarchical authority, similar vestments, similar rituals and similar titles plus a two-way channel for advice, decision-making, control and validation. Western Europe was the context for this model. Although a few U.S. Catholics occasionally pretend otherwise, Christendom never existed in our country.

One successor to the old model can be called the *missionary strategy*, dating from the 1890s. Even though Western European Catholics identified with the church, their secular society was considered missionary territory. Clergy no longer had direct access to the corridors of power or to workplaces. Therefore to influence institutions, Catholicism needed a strategy premised on well-formed laity. The laity's mission under this model was considered "a participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy." A primary goal was blocking secularism, particularly competition from communism. One effort was called Catholic Action (capital A), including groups like Young Christian Workers.

With Vatican II (1962-1965) a *cultural-pastoral model* of dialogue emerged. This church-society model desires religious liberty and then recognizes the autonomy and competency of everyday institutions and professions. It appreciates that God's glory is revealed through the secular—through art, engineering, medicine, human services, public policy, sports and more. The opponent of Christianity is the denial of God, not necessarily the secular realm.

St. John XXIII (1881-1963) opened Vatican II on October 11, 1962 with a desire to dialogue with the world. Ignore "those prophets of gloom," he told the assembly. He welcomed the modern world, not accepting all its beliefs but as a dialogue partner. He was not preoccupied with what some previous popes called "the advance of error" or "evils of the age." Our human genius has made "marvelous progress," said John XXIII. Today's church

"prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity."

Vatican II's cultural-pastoral model is yet to be perfected. But any regression to an old model, in INITIATIVES' opinion, only gives young adults further reason for disaffection from Christianity.

A post-Vatican II lay person shares the good news within their own milieu on the basis of their baptism, not because they belong to an approved Catholic organization or serve as a parish minister, though those involvements are significant to our church's life.

A Catholic in the world is expected to be competent, honest and considerate—on the job, around the home and in the community. Yet that's not quite enough for Catholic Christianity.

Fr. Ladislav Orsy, SJ, an esteemed canon lawyer, is the author of hundreds of articles, including many about the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit "does not want mere service," says Orsy. There is an additional requirement. The Spirit wants "intelligent and free cooperation from [God's] creatures...by demanding their help in building structures and setting norms for the community [which is] unfolding the Kingdom of God." Our work is a partnership with the Holy Spirit. ("Ladislav Orsy: 'As Long as I Breathe, I Hope'" by Fr. James Keenan, SJ in *The Tablet*, 1 King St. Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY England; 7/17/21)

The term *social justice* is used broadly today. In Catholicism it is a specific virtue related to *group participation* in building structures and improving norms. Catholicism insists that post-Vatican II lay people be allergic to injustice. Whenever a person sees a deficient structure or norm on the job, around the home or in the wider community, she or he is to gather like-minded people and incrementally advance peace and justice. The act of social justice is organization. Its outcome is improved structures or norms. (Obtain *What Is Social Justice*, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$5.50)

## Attention Readers

An appeal letter recently made its way to your mailbox. The cost of printing, postage and meetings is increasing. Please help NCL with our 2022 budget. See the form on page eight.

### Taking the Initiative *For the Environment*

Responsible Christians make individual green efforts on behalf of our common home. They take old newspapers to the blue bin in the alley. They refrain from throwing empty pop bottles in the lake.

Individual attention to recycling and other gestures is misplaced, argues Auden Schendler, author of *Getting Green Done* (Public Affairs [2010]; \$17.99). The recycling campaign is “designed to place responsibility for the trash problem on consumers, not manufacturers,” he writes. “The very industry responsible for climate change” is complicit in promoting consumer solutions.

“Masterly propaganda from the beverage and container industries” began shortly after the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970, continues Schendler. Their commercials urged consumers not to litter. Soon enough Exxon Mobil, British Petroleum and others popularized the *carbon footprint calculator* by which individuals were to measure the damage they were doing. Schendler quotes a report from *One Earth Journal* (Radarweg 29, 1043 NX Amsterdam, The Netherlands [5/21]; [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)): These oil companies “consistently used rhetoric aimed at shifting responsibility for climate change away from itself onto consumers.”

Effectively reducing climate change, Schendler concludes, requires enforceable regulations that apply to all energy producers. He names several positive policies, some originating in the U.S. and others internationally. (*N.Y. Times*, 9/5/21)

Protests, no matter how large, will not do the trick, writes Andreas Malm in *How to Blow up a Pipeline* (Verson Books [2021]; \$11.97). The release of carbon into the environment has greatly increased since Earth Day 1970. Large investments are still made “to *additional* facilities for extracting and combusting...oil, gas and coal.”

The title of Malm’s book “is a misnomer,” explains Benjamin Kunkel in a

review. Malm “does not explain *how* to blow up a pipeline so much as to argue *why*” direct action is needed. “For climate activists to confine themselves to peaceful protest is to meanwhile watch the earth become less and less hospitable to human life,” as Kunkel summarizes the book. Direct action will put energy companies on the defensive and will give momentum to the entire climate movement. (*The New Republic* [6/21], 1 Union Sq. W. #600, New York, NY 10003)

Is Schendler correct in arguing that our recycling gestures actually enable energy companies to maintain business as usual? Is Malm correct that green protests are ineffective and that the situation is urgent enough to justify direct action?

For more on the topic, obtain *Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment and inequality, from National Center for the Laity (PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$11).

### Taking the Initiative *In the Seminary*

By INITIATIVES’ count 40 different occupations are mentioned in the New Testament. If God’s writers could use ordinary occupations to tell the good news of salvation, why does the topic of work so rarely find its way into weekend liturgy? Perhaps clerical exposure to ordinary work might help.

“All men studying to be priests” in the Yakima diocese are expected to spend part of their summer learning about work in migrant fields, reports John Gehring in *National Catholic Reporter* (115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111; 9/30/21). This encouraging program has completed its ninth year. The bishop, Most Rev. Joseph Tyson (Chancery, 101 S. 12<sup>th</sup> Ave., Yakima, WA 98902) also participates. He makes the link to our liturgy explicit: These seminarians “want to elevate the bread and wine, the fruit of the vine and work of human hands.” They need to feel that “the sacrifice of the Mass involves real human labor. I want them to see what it takes to get [the Eucharist] on the table.”

Impressed by the Yakima program, the Catholic Extension Society (150 S. Wacker Dr. #2000, Chicago, IL 60606) now facilitates an immersion program for the ordained. They go to migrant fields in Washington and to other sites. Fr. Jack Wall, president of the Extension Society, has a long interest in daily work. He is an original signer of our NCL’s charter and he

oversaw a faith/work center while pastor at Chicago's Old St. Patrick's.

As Tyson and his seminarians continue and maybe expand their fine program, they might reflect on ecclesiology. Their use of phrases like *ministering to the workers* is a tad off. The ministry, it would seem, is mutual. And a phrase like *bringing the church to the migrants* will not do. The church is in the fields, factories, offices, hospitals and construction sites before any priest or seminarian shows up.

## **Taking the Initiative**

### *Against Apparel Sweatshops*

It is a major moral achievement that today nations are measured by their adherence to human rights. However, the definition of human rights is often restricted to political rights. The violations of worker rights (economic rights) are not always subject to consequences. Nonetheless, there is progress and INITIATIVES' readers can do their part.

The Uyghurs are a Turkic-speaking ethnic group. Most are Muslim. Many Uyghurs live in the Chinese province of Xinjiang. About 20% of cotton clothing comes from fields and factories in Xinjiang.

Several advocacy groups, including Sherpa ([www.asso-sherpa.org](http://www.asso-sherpa.org)) and European Uyghur Institute ([www.uyghur-institute.org](http://www.uyghur-institute.org)), have a suit in French court alleging that four apparel companies are guilty of "crimes against humanity." Those companies (Inditex, Uniqio, Skechers and SMPC) allow forced labor of Uyghurs in their supply chain, the suit says. U.S. Customs recently impounded a Uniqio shipment because the clothing contained Xinjiang cotton.

Meanwhile, because of Covid-19 several major apparel brands cancelled orders from factories in Bangladesh and other countries. Severance pay is legally mandated for laid off garment workers worldwide. However, the factories are not honoring their obligation and big retail outlets like Walmart and Benetton are not pressuring their overseas subcontractors, says a report from Worker Rights Consortium (5 Thomas Cr. NW #1000, Washington, DC 20005; [www.workersrights.org](http://www.workersrights.org)).

One solution, agreeable to the Consortium and over 200 other organizations, is a *severance guarantee fund*. If established, major apparel brands pay into the fund and dispersals are made for large-scale wage theft problems.

The effort following the Rana Plaza tragedy in Bangladesh is an example of what can be done to improve working conditions. In April 2013 a fire in a sweatshop caused the plaza to collapse, killing 1,134 workers. The factory had inadequate ventilation, too few extinguishers and locked its exits during the workday.

IndustriAll ([www.industriall-union.org](http://www.industriall-union.org)) and several other groups developed the Accord on Fire and Building Safety. About 200 clothing lines and retail outlets signed it. The Accord's independent inspectors had authority to require safety measures.

The Accord expired this past spring. Wrangling occurred over many weeks until an agreement on September 1, 2021. It has a new name: International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry. It expires November 2023. So far about 80 brands have signed with more signatories expected. A small number of U.S. companies are committed, including Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger and American Eagle. (*N.Y. Times*, 9/15/20, 4/7/21, 5/20/21, 7/3/21, & 8/26/21)

The first step for concerned INITIATIVES' readers is education. Start with the websites in this article or that of Global Labor (1634 I St. NW #1000, Washington, DC 20006; [www.globallaborjustice.org](http://www.globallaborjustice.org)).

The second step is conscientious shopping. Avoid fast fashion. Though difficult, it is possible to find sweatshop-free clothing. For leads, check out Human Thread (St. Benedict Friary, 1015 N. Ninth St., Milwaukee, WI 53233; [www.humanthread.wixsite.com](http://www.humanthread.wixsite.com)). Also try Goods of Conscience (St. Mary's, 28 Attorney St., New York, NY 10002; [www.goods-of-conscience.com](http://www.goods-of-conscience.com)). Fashion for Development ([www.fashion4development.com](http://www.fashion4development.com)), although hampered by Covid-19, promotes fair trade apparel with events, including fashion shows.

The third step uses the virtue of prudence (acting morally in the world as it really is) and the virtue of social justice (organizing like-minded people for an improvement). There are some apparel labels that are better than others—consistently or intermittently. Local retail managers always need positive or negative comments about the apparel lines they sell. With proper research in hand, with a specific improvement to suggest and with a few neighbors or friends, visit the manager of Walmart or another retail outlet.

Some parishes have an anti-trafficking committee and many parishes in Chicago have a

domestic violence committee, thanks to Fr. Chuck Dahm, OP (Dominican House, 1914 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago, IL 60608; [cdahm13@gmail.com](mailto:cdahm13@gmail.com)) and others. A group action on behalf of sweatshop workers can be a logical extension for these committees.

## **Taking the Initiative** *On Chocolate*

About 1.56million children are working on cocoa farms in Ghana and Ivory Coast. This is an increase of 14% over ten years, says U.S. Dept. of Labor ([www.dol.gov](http://www.dol.gov)). There is some increase in school attendance but not enough progress on slavery, especially in “low to medium production areas,” according to “Progress in Reducing Child Labor in Cocoa Growing,” a report from National Opinion Research Center (1155 E. 60<sup>th</sup> St. #200, Chicago, IL 60637; [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org)). Many of the children are trafficked from other areas in Africa, NORC notes.

Several of the largest chocolate companies are on record to eliminate child slavery. For example, Hershey’s (19 Chocolate Ave., Hershey, PA 17033; [www.thehersheycompany.com](http://www.thehersheycompany.com)) has a child labor monitoring system that claims “no evidence of forced child labor in Hershey’s cocoa supply chain.” However, Hershey’s cannot trace about 50% of their products to a specific farm. International Rights Advocates (621 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20002; [www.iradvocates.org](http://www.iradvocates.org)) has a pending lawsuit claiming Hershey’s and six other cocoa dealers violate human rights by tolerating child labor.

This past June our Supreme Court made a decision on a narrow point in the law. The discouraging ruling might have wider implication. The 1789 Alien Tort Statute does not apply to two big U.S. cocoa companies, the Court said. The U.S. companies are too far removed from the situation in another continent to be legally liable for child labor. (*The Marketplace* [8/21], 33 N. Market St. #400, Lancaster, PA 17603 and *Fortune* [6/17/21], 1271 Ave. of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 and *The Guardian* [2/12/21], Kings Pl., 90 York Way, London N1 9GU England)

Until the slavery situation improves, INITIATIVES makes these suggestions: 1.) Give up chocolate, at least until Easter, April 17, 2022. 2.) Try Tony’s Chocolonely (312 NW 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. #100, Portland, OR 97209;

[www.tonyschocolonely.com](http://www.tonyschocolonely.com)). It claims to have fine chocolate without child labor. 3.) Start or expand a Fair Trade project in your parish. Order from Divine Chocolate (425 Eighth St. SE #200, Washington, DC 20003; [www.divinechocolateusa.com](http://www.divinechocolateusa.com)). Then ask other parish-related groups (maybe the youth group or the Knights of Columbus) about the slave content in their candy distribution. Parish life can use good controversy.

## **Taking the Initiative** *On Cookies and the Sabbath*

Everyone in INITIATIVES’ neighborhood calls it Nabisco, though the plant with its pleasant aroma is owned by Mondelez (3 Parkway N. #300, Deerfield, IL 60015). All summer its workers, members of Bakery, Confectionary Union (10401 Connecticut Ave. #400, Kensington, MD 20895), were on the sidewalk or in a lot across the street. Their strike, settled in September, was about pay and retirement plans. As pressing, however, was concern about shift length and overtime. (*N.Y Times*, 8/25/21 & 9/20/21 and *Chicago Tribune*, 9/17/21)

The Mondelez situation is one example of how Covid-19 affects labor relations, writes Lauren Weber in *Wall St. Journal* (9/19/21). Companies address the current labor shortage by asking or requiring overtime. This remedy soon enough is counterproductive not only because it adds to operating expense but because it creates “higher stress and burnout [and eventually] resignations.” Even when a sufficient number of people get their vaccine, “the need for more work from existing workers shows no signs of abating,” Weber concludes.

Covid-19 is not the first time employees have sought fewer hours. In fact, our feast of St. Joseph/International Workers Day (May First) was inspired by an 1886 Chicago protest for shorter hours. The Federation of Trades and Labor held a May rally/demonstration in our Haymarket area (now a trendy restaurant spot). Late in the evening someone threw dynamite. Eight workers were rounded up, including a lay minister, a printer and others. Seven were convicted; four were hanged. The incident gave rise to an annual, worldwide day for worker dignity.

Covid-19 accentuates the topic of working hours. For example, the 100 employees at Kickstarter (58 Kent St., Brooklyn, NY 11222;

[www.kickstarter.com](http://www.kickstarter.com)), a popular crowd-funding platform, will work four days per week in 2022. Pay remains the same. This is not a gimmick, says Kickstarter's CEO Aziz Hasan.

Autonomy (<https://autonomy.work>), a research firm in the United Kingdom, participated in a study of over 2,500 employees in Iceland. Backed by unions and civic groups, the experiment was four days with 36-hours per worker. Productivity remained the same. Sick days decreased. Customers noted better quality of service. Now, 86% of Iceland employees are allowed a four-day week. (*Wall St. Journal*, 7/31/21)

Keep in mind that the purpose of a shorter workweek is betrayed if time off is spent on unnecessary consumption or on *working at one's leisure*. (See *Waiting for the Weekend* by Witold Rybczynski, Penguin Press, 1991.)

The purpose of time off, writes Josef Pieper (1904-1997), is to establish "the right and claims of leisure in the face of the claims of *total labor*." An economy premised on total work puts forth "the illusion of a life fulfilled." But time off in such an economy is false leisure. True leisure, Pieper concludes, is festivity or celebration. It is the point at which "effortlessness, calm and relaxation" come together. And true leisure "ultimately derives its life from divine worship," even though people are likely not conscious of the association. (*Leisure: the Basis of Culture*, Ignatius Press [1952]; \$15.26)

## **Taking the Initiative** *On Food Delivery*

INITIATIVES is happy to report some progress on working conditions for food delivery riders, of which there are 65,000 to 80,000 in New York City. Most use an electric bike. App-based delivery (Door Dash, Uber Eats, Grubhub and smaller companies) is now a multibillion dollar industry.

This past September the city council in NYC passed the nation's first health and safety legislation on food delivery, reports Jeffery Mays. (*N.Y. Times*, 9/24/21)

The app companies can no longer charge drivers a fee for processing their pay nor charge them for thermal delivery bags. The company must disclose their gratuity policy. The drivers can specify their maximum distance per order and there will be standard criteria for the pay rate. Plus, participating restaurants must allow drivers to use their washrooms. The

drivers still remain independent contractors and thus receive few if any benefits. For more on the legislation, contact Councilwoman Carlina Rivera (254 E. Fourth St., New York, NY 10009).

Los Deliveristas Unidos, a drivers' organization, lobbied for the legislation and backs other improvements. It is affiliated with Worker's Justice Project (365 Broadway, Brooklyn, NY 11211; [www.workersjustice.org](http://www.workersjustice.org)).

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## **News and Views**

For 19 years *The Catholic Spirit* (777 Forest St., St. Paul, MN 55106) has bestowed a Leading with Faith award on area businesspeople. During that time just over 200 have been honored for exemplifying what it means to be Catholic in the marketplace. The awardees attend a luncheon and are profiled in the newspaper. (Covid-19 forced modifications.) In 2022 the Leading with Faith program will be entrusted to St. Joseph Guild (PO Box 9038, North St. Paul, MN 55109).

All the Leading with Faith winners pray for wisdom, for colleagues and for customers. They do not proselytize because that is not the Catholic style of faith and work. Rather, a Catholic who competently attends to business is thereby serving faithfully.

Paul Kuhrmeyer (Innovo Automation, 6845 20<sup>th</sup> Ave. S. #140, Centerville, MN 55038) is a 2021 winner. He and his ten employees design and build and install electronic controls for specialty equipment. Kuhrmeyer implicitly draws upon his Catholicism by interpreting virtues to his employees as situations arise. He names prudence, perseverance and optimism.

Shelia Oliver, who was just promoted to a Seattle location, introduced a regular feature, Voices for Change, at Fox 9 TV in the Twin Cities. Following the murder of George Floyd, she wanted to create an opinion forum for community members who lack easy media access.

Dan Delmore (Gearty-Delmore Funeral Chapel, 3888 W. Broadway Ave., Robbinsdale, MN 55422) expresses a Catholic notion of faith and work: "Every one of us exhibits our faith every day in every walk of life, often without realizing it." He admits, however, that in his job it is sometimes proper to talk about faith—discussing the mystery of eternal life or the meaning of liturgical symbols and more. There are a few forums in other cities that

recognize Catholics for their worldly work—the annual Red Mass, for example. But more common are recognitions for those who volunteer in parish ministries—appreciation dinners, blessings and bulletin shout-outs. INITIATIVES’ home diocese, for example, has an annual award that includes a Mass at our cathedral. (Modifications imposed by Covid-19.)

However, the name of this Christifideles Laici Award is mismatched with its description. Its promotional material says it is “bestowed upon an individual Catholic layperson who has demonstrated by participation in parish life the personal and ministerial renewal called for by the Papal Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*.” In keeping with the description, the profiles of the deserving winners mostly detail their parish involvements.

In 1987 Catholic bishops participated in a Synod on the Laity. Our NCL assisted their process by hosting regional conversations in San Francisco, Albany, Chicago and nine other locales. In January 1989 St. John Paul II (1920-2005) issued a concluding statement or exhortation on the Synod titled *Christ’s Faithful People* (*Christifideles Laici* in Latin).

Quoting Vatican II (1962-1965), John Paul II describes the lay faithful as “persons who live in the world...in every one of the secular professions and occupations.” He continues: “They study, they work, they form relationships as friends, professionals, members of society [and] cultures... The world thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation...”

“The eyes of faith behold a wonderful scene: that of a countless number of lay people, both women and men, busy at work in their daily life and activity...looked upon in love by the Father, untiring laborers who work in the Lord’s vineyard... These are the humble yet great builders of the kingdom of God in history... The lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in public life; that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas.”

Parish ministry is essential to the life of the church. But the whole church needs to remember that 99% of Christian life occurs at work—on the job, around the home and in the neighborhood.

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## 130 Years *Of Catholic Social Thought*

The parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:29-37*), Marcus Mescher asserts in *The Ethics of Encounter: Christian Neighbor Love As A Practice of Solidarity* (Orbis Books [2020]; \$40.00), exemplifies the kind of neighbor that everyone is called to be, one who “goes out of his or her way and draws near those in need.” He argues that Jesus does not mean for the Samaritan to be seen as an exceptional hero, but as a paradigm for how to love God by loving others.

Ivan Illich (1926-2002) makes the same point about the Good Samaritan in *The Rivers North of the Future* (Anansi Press [2005]; \$24.95). “We are creatures that find our perfection only by establishing relationships,” he says. The terms of morality today are about “relationships rather than rules.”

Mescher of Xavier University in Cincinnati explores what a culture of encounter, as proposed by Pope Francis, would entail at the individual, social and institutional levels. To overcome the social division and inequality that are so prevalent in U.S. society he prescribes an ethics of solidarity, “intentionally choosing encounter—with courage, mercy, generosity, humility, and fidelity that make connection and inclusive community possible.” He proposes a *theology of neighbor* that replaces “doing for” with the mutuality of “being with,” attuned to the way God accompanies and suffers with poor and marginalized persons. It involves not just individual actions, but the building of inclusive communities. Neighborly love is to be rooted in solidarity and the preferential option for the poor.

Practicing this challenging ethics of solidarity, as Mescher advocates, requires discernment. The gospels impel every person to work for a more just, equitable, and inclusive community. “It means drawing near the other—intentionally choosing encounter,” but what that might entail is not the same from everyone. Each person must discern what it means for him or her to respond “according to what is fitting for their time and place, resources and limits, roles and responsibilities.”

As an example of solidarity, Mescher cites Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ and Homeboy Industries (130 W. Bruno St., Los Angeles, CA 90012) for efforts among gang members in the poorest part of LA. Boyle says, “Compassion is not a

relationship between healer and wounded. It is a covenant among equals.” His relationship with the young men and women has no hint of judgment, but rather it is grounded in awe at what they have to carry. An ethic of encounter, solidarity and belonging--these are the basis of a theology of Christian neighbor love. It is the ethic that Mescher urges for every Christian to embody in his or her own circumstances.

Mescher concludes with a call to action rooted in the practice of hope. He quotes peace activist Fr. Daniel Berrigan, SJ (1921-2016): “If you want to be hopeful, you have to do hopeful things.”

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## Rest in Peace

*Shelia Berner (1934-2021)*

Pope Francis continually urges fellow Catholics to build a *culture of encounter*. This means “that we as a people should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges.”

Perhaps Francis got this notion from Berner who was passionate about relating to others, one-to-one without preconceptions. In each encounter she gave no consideration to a person’s political or religious affiliation, their economic standing, their age, their lifestyle or any accidental trait. Berner’s openness was genuine. She was predisposed to elicit the story of each person. She wanted to really listen.

Berner was an undergrad at Manhattanville College (2900 Purchase St., Purchase, NY 10577). Her core values of curiosity and empathy were reinforced there by the Religious of the Sacred Heart ([www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org)), who stressed the Christian’s responsibility to alleviate social problems.

Berner and husband Bob of 64 years raised five children in an active household. As the children completed high school, she returned to school, earning an MSW degree. For 25 years thereafter she was an employee at Howard Area Community Center (7648 N. Paulina St., Chicago, IL 60626). It began as a project of St. Jerome Church in the Rodgers Park neighborhood and grew into a complete social service facility. Its family center is now named for Berner. She was involved in other social improvement causes and was generous toward several organizations including our NCL.

In what Francis calls a “throwaway culture,” people are treated as objects—prized when they have money or are charming, but neglected when they don’t shine. Berner preferred, again in Francis’ words, to get “involved in people’s lives [and] thus take on the smell of sheep.”

The Berner family requests memorial donations to Top Box (222 W. Merchandise Mart #11-131, Chicago, IL 60654; [www.topboxfoods.com](http://www.topboxfoods.com)) where Berner volunteered in recent years. It is an innovative program that distributes food at an affordable price through churches and community centers.

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## INITIATIVES

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Editor: Bill Droel ([wdroel@cs.com](mailto:wdroel@cs.com)). Contributing to this issue: Bob Raccuglia, former NCL board member.

NCL, founded in 1978, is an independent 501-C-3 Catholic organization with a State of Illinois charter. NCL’s board includes Sergio Barrera, Charles DiSalvo, Ambrose Donnelly, Tom Donnelly, Bill Droel, Adam Fitzpatrick and Lauren Sukal.

For background on NCL theology and history, get our anniversary booklet, *Social Holiness* (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; free).

A person dies and arrives in a beautiful place surrounded by every conceivable comfort. A figure in a white garment announces, “You may have anything you choose—any food, any pleasure, any entertainment.” For some days the person samples widely. But one day the person grows bored. “I am tired of all this. I need something to do. What kind of work is there for me?” The attendant sadly shook his head and replied, “Sorry, that’s the one thing we can’t do for you.” To which the person exclaimed, “Well, that’s a fine thing. I might as well be in hell.” The attendant softly replied, “Where do you think you are?”