

<h1>Initiatives</h1> <p>In Support of Christians in the World</p>	<p>National Center for the Laity PO Box 291102 Chicago, IL 60629 www.catholiclabor.org</p>	<p>May 2022 Number 265</p>
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Covid-19

How can the U.S. better prepare for the next Covid-19 wave and for subsequent emergencies? Catholic social thought, particularly its principle of subsidiarity, suggests a long-term strategy.

Why do some countries better deal with Covid-19 than others? A team at *Lancet* (www.thelancet.com; 2/1/22) compared 177 countries. Their report, *Pandemic Preparedness and Covid-19*, considers GDP, obesity rate, population density, smoking, pollution, cancer rate, exposure to previous viruses, health care delivery and more.

Ezra Klein, author of *Why We Are Polarized* (Simon & Schuster [2021]; \$17), summarizes the *Lancet* study: While “no single variable explains everything,” one factor consistently pairs with effective response to the pandemic: high civic/social trust.

As Thomas Bollyky, a contributor to the *Lancet* study, tells him: Success “depends on trust—trust between citizens and their government and trust between citizens themselves.” (*N.Y. Times*, 2/7/22)

Subsidiarity, one of 20+ Catholic social principles, celebrates intermediate groups that foster trust or solidarity and aim toward the common good—extended family, parish, veterans’ club, community organization, soccer league and more. These groups stand between harried individuals and impersonal entities like government and big business. These subsidiarity groups create sociability, address problems, share information and allow for genuine participation in wider society.

Our society was once rich in subsidiarity groups. Ours was a place where people acted on their self-interest while staying alert to the interests of neighbors and friends. Beginning in about 1970, however, voluntary associations in the U.S. declined. (See *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam, Simon & Schuster [2000]; \$20 and *The Upswing* by Putnam and Shaylyn Romney Garrett, S&S [2020]; \$18.)

A society that has the material tools to fight a plague or disaster will not succeed if people don’t trust the tools or one another, says

Klein. The U.S. “lead the world in vaccine development,” yet the U.S. lagged in deployment of vaccines and other anti-Covid measures. It so happens that the U.S. is among the lowest on public trust and consequently had one of the highest infection rates.

Subsidiarity means cooperating with neighbors and fellow citizens. It creates an ethical texture in society. It increases trust as consumers and neighbors negotiate with one another and with businesses and government.

To be clear: Subsidiarity is not anti-business or anti-government. Yes, some businesses stumbled in recent months. Yes, federal and state entities had a checkered response to the pandemic. Red tape interfered. Nonetheless, Moderna, Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and other pharmaceuticals, drawing upon their previous research, marvelously developed safe and effective anti-Covid vaccines in record time. Walgreen’s and other companies distributed vaccines and other anti-Covid tools. Government sent stimulus checks to households, allowed many businesses to keep people employed, sent monthly checks to families with children and more. But lack of trust blunted the tools.

How can social capital in the U.S. be replenished? To be continued... For now, more on subsidiarity in *Fraternity and Social Friendship* by Pope Francis plus *Public Friendship* by Bill Droel (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$18 for two booklets).

Attention Readers

INITIATIVES’ readers can get *Today’s American Catholic*, a cyber-publication from Connecticut for free. Send your email address to editor@todaysamericancatholic.org.

Taking the Initiative For Green

To affect the behavior of an energy company, a disinvestment campaign is “the least effective tactic,” says Doug Orr in *Dollars & Sense* (PO Box 209, Portsmouth, NH 03802;

2/22). This is particularly true, he persuasively argues, if disinvestment is the singular approach.

Students at hundreds of colleges and many high schools pressure administrators and trustees to sell off fossil fuel stocks. Students are connected through the 400 hubs of Sunrise Movement (www.sunrisemovement.org). Student campaigns can also network through Three Hundred Fifty (PO Box 843004, Boston, MA 02284; <https://350.org>), an international hub.

Swarthmore College was among the first to have a student disinvestment group (www.facebook.com/sunriseswarthmore). The trustees rejected the students' proposal in 2015. Debate continues.

Trustees at other schools accede to the students. In March 2021 the University of Michigan decided that their "investment strategy will focus more on renewable energy, stop investing in certain fossil fuel-based funds and halt direct investments in publicly traded companies that are the largest greenhouse gas contributors." Students at Middlebury College in Vermont had an eight-year campaign. In 2019 trustees agreed to phase out fossil fuel investments.

What is the error in the disinvestment strategy? "Disinvestment is not defunding," Orr insists. "It has almost no impact on the functioning of the [energy] firm." A company only gets money from stock sales at an IPO. Subsequently stock trading is irrelevant to its cash flow. A sale doesn't lower stock value.

Let's suppose, says Orr, that a retirement fund has 7.5million shares of Exxon Mobil and, persuaded by a disinvestment campaign, sells them all on one day. The "daily trade volume of Exxon stock [is] 21.5million shares," he continues. "Exxon would likely not even notice" the fund's sale.

Energy companies do need money, but they don't get it from stock trading. The best strategy is to defund a fossil fuel company.

How? All the colleges, religious orders, retirement funds and environment-minded individuals might collectively refuse to buy bonds floated by one fossil fuel company at a time. Similarly, the environment coalition can pressure banks to quit underwriting bond issues and making loans to a fossil fuel company. To get a bank's attention, the green coalition might close all its accounts in a specific bank on a specific day.

The tactic of green stockholder resolutions, "while limited, is more

effective...than disinvestment," Orr continues. Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (475 Riverside Dr. #1842, New York, NY 10115; www.iccr.org) has effectively employed this tactic for 50 years. Along these lines there's the approach of a new investment fund, Engine No. 1 (710 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94111; www.engine1.com). It got a green slate elected to Exxon's board. Engine 1 holds less than 1% of Exxon stock but finds allies among state pension funds and brokerage houses.

Another effective avenue, Orr says, is through legislation. Students and like-minded groups can lobby for a carbon tax, for restrictions on gas guzzlers or for requiring green cement in new construction. An energy company won't spend much to counter a disinvestment campaign but it will spend plenty to counter green legislation.

Finally, an old-fashioned, targeted (one company at a time), sustained boycott can motivate a fossil fuel company. A boycott doesn't significantly harm its cash flow, but the company doesn't want a bad public image.

Taking the Initiative *In Meat Packing*

We are carnivores. Factoring in those who refrain from beef, each person on average annually consumes the equivalent of 220 hamburgers. Of course, sometimes a person has steak, meatloaf, or Italian beef. Then there is pork and lamb plus poultry.

From Christmas 1865 until 1971 most of that meat came through Chicago. The growth years for our Union Stockyard were 1890 to 1925. The yard was seemingly in full gear in the 1950s, but decline was already in place as early as 1930s, writes Dominic Pacyga in *Slaughterhouse* (University of Chicago Press [2015]; \$18).

Sometimes called *Packingtown* or *The Square Mile* (and today named *Stockyards Industrial Corridor*), the yard once contained over 30 slaughterhouses on its 450 acres. Other facilities on the site or nearby included the Chicago Livestock Exchange for sellers, buyers and brokers plus places that used animal waste to make soap, fertilizer, glue, and buttons. The yard had its own hotel, restaurants, four banks, a daily newspaper, pumping station, police and fire departments and a beltline railroad with 250 miles of track. Several neighborhoods were economically and culturally connected to the

yard, including over 50 churches, scores of taverns, small businesses and service agencies.

In the early 1900s, as Pacyga details, over 500,000 tourists annually came to witness the spectacle. In those days Swift & Co., one of the larger companies, daily processed 2,500 cattle and 8,000 hogs.

It was lack of refrigeration that necessitated the animals arrive in Chicago on four hoofs. The meat was locally distributed or preserved in order to ship to the East. As early as 1875 Gustavus Swift (1839-1903) had a fleet of ice-boxcars. In the 1960s liquid nitrogen replaced ice, allowing efficient shipping by train, airplane and truck. The stockyards no longer had to be located in Chicago. Food processing decentralized.

Kristy Nabhan Warren picks up the meatpacking story, focusing on rural communities and packinghouse workers. The rural Midwest is today's Ellis Island, she writes in *Meat Packing America: How Migration, Work and Faith Unite and Divide the Heartland* (University of North Carolina Press [2021]; \$19.95). The packing plants are the most diverse workplaces in the U.S., more so than universities, medical complexes or tech corridors. The workers and their families are from Mexico, Central Africa, Vietnam, Latin America and elsewhere. They speak French, English, Spanish, Vietnamese or Hakha Chin. The Heartland is where "we find the future of the U.S."

Warren describes how crumbling rural towns regain a place in our economy with this influx of immigrants. But there is tension between the old-timers and new arrivals. Those rural towns that experience a second life are those that, with some missteps, manage changes.

Warren profiles several priests who balance the desires of older parishioners and the needs of immigrants. It's slow going. Consolidation of parishes adds to the difficulty. Just as things start to jell, a priest is asked to administer an additional church or is reassigned.

Warren contrasts parish-based clergy with plant chaplains, popular with several food companies. Priests and other parish ministers are able at times to critique the food industry. The chaplains, though beneficial to workers and their families, reinforce a corporate religion. Food processing companies implicitly "rebrand their workplaces as religious sites," Warren says. Some companies recruit their own chaplains—usually evangelical though a small number of Catholics have such jobs. Other companies use a

service like Marketplace Chaplains (www.mchapusa.com).

Although these meatpacking jobs provide families with an entry into the mainstream, the work is often harsh and dangerous, as Warren describes. She found no worker who wants their children to have a similar job. She would agree with a sentence from Pacyga describing the old Chicago stockyard: "The packers' concern for the comfort of their livestock did not necessarily extend to their workers."

Taking the Initiative Among Ranchers

Like meatpacking workers, ranchers are "trapped within a system of neoliberal exchange," writes Kristy Nabhan Warren in *Meat Packing America* (University of North Carolina Press [2021]; \$19.95). Four big packing companies handle about 85% of beef—JBS Holdings of Brazil, which acquired Swift and Smithfield plus Tyson of Arkansas, Cargill of Kansas and National Beef Packing of Missouri.

Some ranchers are starting meat processing cooperatives in order to get a better return on their cattle. Sustainable Beef (www.facebook.com/sustainable-beef-llc) needs \$325million to launch its rancher-owned plant in North Platte, NE. By one estimate from last year, a rancher loses \$8.60 per animal after paying for feed, labor, utilities, transportation and more. Sustainable Beef, using new technology, says it can make raising cattle profitable while improving wages of ranch hands, which currently average \$31,210 annually. (*Wall St. Journal*, 3/21/22)

Ranchers are squeezed in a monopoly market, says Chad Tentinger (Cattlemen's Heritage, 666 Walnut St., Des Moines, IA 50309; www.cattlemensheritage.com). Plus consumers pay more and meatpacking workers can be exploited. He too is launching a small rancher-owned meatpacking facility (maybe 400,000 cattle annually) that pays decent wages and sells affordably. He needs \$450million, of which \$150million comes from fellow ranchers. The remainder will be grants and loans and presumably some portion will come from a new federal program to distribute \$1billion to independent meat and poultry providers. (*N.Y. Times*, 1/16/22)

These coops are risky ventures. INITIATIVES will follow their progress.

Taking the Initiative *In Mining*

The golden age of commercial copper mining occurred from 1845 to 1965. Men as young as 16 extracted high grade nickel and copper often found a mile deep. Their workday was 12 hours. They considered it a good day if no one was injured.

Mary Doria Russell describes these miners and their families in a historical novel, *The Women of Copper County* (Simon & Schuster [2019]; \$17). The setting is the Keweenaw Peninsula in Upper Michigan, in the City of Calumet, known during the story's time (1913 to 1914) as Red Jacket. The protagonist is "Big" Annie Clements, the fearless leader of Women's Auxiliary Local 15. Her opponent is Calumet and Hecla Mining Co., headquartered in Boston.

The locals of Western Federation of Miners request recognition from C & H. The company refuses. The miners go on strike because they want recognition—and then negotiations for an eight hour day at \$3 pay per day and an end to child labor. As mining technology improves, drills are more difficult and dangerous to manage. The company insists that one worker could control a powerful drill. The overriding issue is company paternalism—its control of housing, stores and its monitoring of private life.

The strike drags on while the company, in Russell's novel, hires a violence-prone union-busting firm. Union leader Mary "Mother" Jones (1837-1930) and famous lawyer Clarence Darrow (1857-1938) appear in the novel.

On Christmas Eve Annie Clements and her friends host a party for union families at Italian Hall. Someone shouts "fire." Panic ensues and 73 are crushed to death, mostly children.

Annie Clements' romance takes up some pages at the novel's conclusion. There's no happy ending for the miners, however. The union declares bankruptcy and on Easter 1914 the members vote to end the strike. Soon enough the town depopulates; many families move to Detroit where Ford offers \$5 per day pay.

"Most of the events and many of the characters in this novel are known to us" from historical records, Russell says in her afterword. Annie Clements is a composite. She represents the belief that if you work for the common good, the good life will become common. Can that be true? What has changed in labor relations since

1913-1914? Has harshness disappeared? Are we closer to a common good?

Tom Geoghegan gives his opinion on these questions in *Which Side Are You On?* (\$10) and *Only One Thing Can Save Us* (\$12), both from National Center for the Laity (PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629—while supplies last).

Work and Art

Alice McDermott's novels often involve Catholic characters and settings, and so, she sometimes is asked to speak about faith. Her recent nonfiction book, *What About the Baby: Some Thoughts on the Art of Fiction* (Farrar, Straus [2021]; \$27), includes an essay on "Faith and Literature" in which she reflects on the role of faith in her work, as well as the similarity of the process of faith and the creative process.

McDermott remarks that the language of the Catholic Church often provides her characters with a language "for the things they would otherwise be unable to express: hopes, dreams, yearnings, fears." The promises of Christianity, she writes, speak to her characters' longings and desire to make sense of suffering, loss, forgiveness, love, and hope. McDermott credits Catholicism with giving her a sacramental outlook, recognizing the "ordinary transformed into extraordinary." She sees faith as raising the kinds of questions that the world's great literature explores. "Not answered, mind you, but under long and serious and eloquent consideration." Being Catholic informs her fiction and working with words informs her faith.

McDermott describes her relationship to her Catholicism, with all the church's failings and instances of moral blindness as "a rocky ride—a difficult, often maddening journey, this lifelong adherence to the faith given to me at my birth." She is clear-eyed about the sinful, complex nature of the church, but would not have expected it to be exempt from the whole gamut of human struggle and strife.

McDermott sees similarity in the creative process and the process of faith (not achievement of faith, she insists, but *process* of faith). Both include "an edging forward and a falling back, a holding of one's breath, a letting go, a groping in the dark, working in the dark toward something—some perfection—we yearn for, strive for." Artistic inspiration and religious faith involve questioning and doubt, faltering

steps, openness to the unexpected, long effort and moments of grace. “It is the work of a lifetime.”

Work Prayers

The Craftsman’s Creed says, “My head learns knowledge but my hands test if it is true. My hands do the work, but my heart gives it meaning. My heart has passion, but my hands and head give it expression.”

There is also a *Craftsman’s Code* at www.craftsmanwithcharacter.org. These are part of a work-study course that includes reflection and has its students shadowing experienced workers. The aspiring craftsmen are women and men.

David Hataj of Edgerton Gear (20 Gear Dr., Edgerton, WI 53534) is the leader of this project. His inspiration for connecting work and faith came through some evangelical leaders who were involved with our NCL in Coalition for Ministry in Daily Life.

Hataj explains it all in *Good Work: How Blue-Collar Business Can Change Lives* (Moody Publishing [2020]; \$15.99).

130+ Years

Of Catholic Social Thought

“The worst kind of unemployment is to be without a vocation,” said Ed Marciniak (1917-2004), a principal founder of our National Center for the Laity.

Marciniak was a major participant in the U.S. Catholic social action movement during the 1930s and 1940s. He is among those profiled in *Go to the Worker: America’s Labor Apostles* by Kimball Baker (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$14). Each chapter reinforces the theme that social action can be a spiritual vocation. The ten chapters are arranged in an order that gives a sense of the sweep of events during Great Depression and World War II years. *Go to the Worker* is an engaging history of priests and laypeople who came together to help workers organize and get fair treatment. Doing so was important to them both spiritually and socially. They saw workers’ need for justice as equivalent of the need of the hungry to be fed, or the naked to be clothed, or the homeless to be housed. Marciniak and others, Baker writes, lived “the message that personal reform and social reform went hand in hand so that working

for reform promoted both the common good and one’s spiritual enrichment.”

Baker, a non-Catholic, didn’t know about Catholic social action until the mid-1990s, when as a graduate student at Catholic University of America, his dissertation advisor, a labor historian, suggested the topic. Baker then combed through archives in Chicago, Detroit, New York City, Pittsburgh, and Boston and interviewed many movement veterans.

Marciniak and his friends opened Chicago Catholic Worker in 1938. He was in the thick of it for years to come; a go-to person for many Chicagoans and national leaders. He became well-known as editor of the hard-hitting newspaper, *Work*. The Catholic Labor Alliance, an antecedent of our NCL, was its publisher.

Thinking back on *Go to the Worker*, published a dozen years ago, Baker says the main lesson for him is the great importance Marciniak always attached to vocations. How well we live our daily lives, Marciniak felt, is determined by how well we fulfill our calling. After his vocation as husband and father, his major vocations were as an active Catholic layperson and a fighter for worker-justice. Marciniak never saw those two as in conflict. Baker asked Marciniak: “Are you a Christian?” “I’m becoming one,” he replied.

To be clear: Marciniak was sure that the reason his worker-justice efforts were spiritually and socially meaningful was not because they were *Christian* or *Catholic*, but because they befitted the dignity of workers and work itself. “A policy is not good and beautiful because a bishop says so,” Marciniak often said. “A bishop endorses a policy because it is good and beautiful.” Marciniak and his fellow activists frequently cited the example of Christ ministering to a needy person, and they emphasized Christ’s remark that the person was his brother or sister, in the same sense all of us are sisters and brothers and children of a higher power. This concept makes it desirable for those of one or another religion to effectively partner with those of other faith traditions and with like-minded humanists.

It is hard nowadays to enrich one’s vocation to the world because of a mixed message. Our culture seems to value social improvement, but in nearly every way it glamorizes money and corporate power. Marciniak and his allies dealt with the same conflicting messages during the Catholic social action heyday. On the one hand, they had the powerful message of “go to the worker” from

Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) and from Pope Pius XI (1857-1939). On the other hand many employers were, in Marciniak's words, "exploiting human dignity" to the glorification of wealth. To convey the proper message it was always of great importance to Marciniak, as it is now to NCL, to involve responsible employers in societal improvement.

The successors to the older social action movement, certainly including our NCL, continue the struggle. The challenges are many. Will parishes, congregations, synagogues and mosques sufficiently turn outward toward God's mission in the world? Can those young adults who are not affiliated with a church sustain their idealism? Will they find a nurturing community of friends?

Writing in *America* (1212 Sixth Ave. #1100, New York, NY 10036; 12/12/70), Marciniak stated that the best strategy for Catholics is "to engage with other concerned people in works of service and justice for any human person in need, regardless of religion, nationality, race, or situation in life." It's good for people in need to come into churches, he said, but it is better when the people in churches go out to the needy. Such action is a centrifugal force, Marciniak said. Where do we see it today? To be continued...

News and Views

The word *service* needs reconsideration. Nowadays it is used to describe a post-sale relationship with an individual consumer, as in "Our dealership will service your car bumper-to-bumper." The word is similarly used in health care and social work to describe treatments for individual clients or patients, as in "Our surgical recovery service is the best." The word *service* has the same individualistic connotation in church circles, as in "Our parish has a service ministry to needy families."

An ongoing tension in the labor movement points to why service needs reconsideration. The Massachusetts Nurses Association (www.massnurses.org), to give one example, contrasts two modes of operation. For a union in service mode, a "good relationship with management is most important." It settles grievances "through arbitration...without involvement of members," if possible. Bargaining is done by a "small committee [and] negotiations [are] often kept secret until a settlement is reached." According to the opposing

organizing model, "defending members is most important." Grievances are taken to the "immediate supervisor [and settled] by showing solidarity of workers." Bargaining is done by a "large committee [with] constant flow of information to members." The key characteristic of the organizing model is representation of all workers—its members and the unorganized.

It so happens that after an initial phase many unions are primarily structured around "servicing the contract." Their members are like consumers or clients—in effect paying a fee for service with the added bonus of discounts for everything from mortgage rates to admission at Disney World.

For many years this model worked reasonably well—wages increased, access to upward mobility followed and the U.S. created a vibrant middle class. This is no longer the case. Does a response to union decline necessitate abandoning service for organizing? Do we serve our members, or do we organize them?

This choice is a false. The problem is the use of the word *service*--not the word itself. The Greek origin of the word service is *διακονία* or *diaconia*. In Greek this meant "caring for each other." The concept implies a relationship and mutuality that is made real through rituals of cooperation and support within a community. The word *diaconia*, now familiar in religious circles, originally was secular, cultural.

With a little more probing *diaconia* or service has a richer meaning. Because its core concept is taking care of one another, the word is relational; it is about a shared humanity. Thus service or *diaconia* means meeting people where they are. It carries an implicit call to action, i.e. envisioning and creating opportunities and possibilities where none exist; in other words, creating change or bringing about righteousness or justice.

Greek culture saw service as central to conversations especially difficult ones. It was important to find time for these conversations because the *act* of service was to create the conditions for interdependence and an understanding of self-worth derived from human connectedness.

The other original meaning of the word *service* is protest; a proactive notion of protest against the unfair social and economic conditions. It involves developing habits and practices that are just--and this is grounded in politics. Service in its proper sense is political because it focuses on our common humanity and seeks to create social structures that sustain a just

and open society. No polarity exists between direct service and politics.

What are the implications for unions, commerce, health care or churches with a

recovery of relationships and protest in the exercise of service?

Happenings

In late April, Mary and Raymond Simon, longtime friends of our NCL, were guests of honor during the Trustees Dinner for Catholic Theological Union (5416 S. Cornell Ave., Chicago, IL 60615). The Simons raised eight children. Enough said... Raymond, now retired, served as Corporation Counsel for Chicago during the administration of Richard J. Daley (1902-1976). He assisted many other clients during his long career. Mary somehow found time to obtain her undergrad degree from Loyola University and a graduate degree from the University of Chicago. She has been involved in civic affairs, including her service to NCL's cousin organization, Institute for Urban Life. The Simons are also honored at Loyola University (www.luc.edu) with a chair in constitutional law.

Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology (20 Archbishop May Dr., St. Louis, MO 63119; www.faithscience.org) distributes *Conscious Energy and the Evolution of Philosophy* by Joe Provenzano, now in its third edition. Consider a membership to ITEST (\$80 for full benefits). Tell ITEST that NCL sent you.

INITIATIVES

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Editor: Bill Droel (wdroel@cs.com). Contributing to this issue: Kimball Baker, author of *Go to the Worker* and Mary Ann Droel and Tim McCluskey, National Education Association and 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 papers are in Alter Library (Mt. St. Joseph University, 5701 Delhi Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45233).

NCL's board includes Sergio Barrera, Charles DiSalvo, Ambrose Donnelly, Tom Donnelly, Bill Droel, Adam Fitzpatrick and Lauren Sukal.

NCL is scouting young adults. NCL needs them to contribute an item for INITIATIVES on occasion and/or to serve on NCL's board and/or to represent NCL at conferences. Know someone? Send along contact information to wdroel@cs.com. Full details will be provided.

"It is always possible to harm others gravely through motives that are subjectively sincere but objectively wrong." –Fr. Thomas Lynch (1932-1997)

"The corruption of the best is the worst." –Ivan Illich (1926-2002) in *The Rivers North of the Future* (House of Anansi [2005]; \$24.95). Illich became a Monsignor for the Archdiocese of New York at age 33, the youngest ever in the U.S. In the early 1970s he discontinued his public priestly functions.