

<h1>Initiatives</h1> <p>In Support of Christians in the World</p>	<p>National Center for the Laity          PO Box 291102          Chicago, IL 60629  <a href="http://www.catholiclabor.org">www.catholiclabor.org</a></p>	<p><b>January 2023</b></p> <p><b>Number 269</b></p>
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## Turn Toward the World

The open window policy of Vatican II (1963-1965) no longer makes sense, say some Catholic leaders of our day. The world is too different from 60 years ago to expect that baptized Christians have, as Vatican II says, “the duty of going out into the whole world.”

Modernity heralded a grand change, including its singular achievement of affirming the dignity of each individual, free to flourish to the best of their ability. However in recent years, freedom has come unmoored. Libertarian individualism now reigns. Formerly objective standards are now subject to context and interpretation. Why would Catholicism dialogue with such a world? It is proper, again some say, to just attack modern trends. Others say it is better for Christians to retreat into God-fearing enclaves.

Pope Pius IX (1792-1878) and other 19<sup>th</sup> century Catholic leaders did retreat “into a defensive stance” against modernity, writes John McGreevy in *Catholicism: A Global History* (W.W. Norton [2022]; \$35). Yet despite differences between Catholicism and today’s world, our NCL says that sophisticated dialogue is still the best strategy.

McGreevy names Sargent Shriver (1915-2011) among Catholic leaders who embraced an outward-looking Catholicism. Shriver was the first director of the Peace Corps and a vice-presidential candidate. He supported wife Eunice (1921-2009) as she founded the Special Olympics. (*Commonweal* [8/22], 475 Riverside Dr. #405, New York, NY 10115)

Shriver was a presenter at NCL’s founding convention and remained a supporter. His posture toward the world exemplifies NCL’s model; that is, the Vatican II model.

Shriver’s “faith was deeply traditional,” write James Price and Kenneth Melchin in *Spiritualizing Politics without Politicizing Religion* (University of Toronto Press [2022]; \$45 Canadian). About half of his life was spent in the older classical era of Catholicism that “deeply mistrusted the modern world.” But Shriver anticipated and adopted Vatican II themes. To use one of his metaphors: Quit

looking into the mirror; turn toward the window. He was comfortable with the newer Catholic self-understanding, say Price and Melchin. His Catholicism generally affirmed “liberalism and science, championed social justice and equality for women.”

Shriver acted in the world on the authority of his baptism. He didn’t seek permission from any Chancery or rectory because he did not claim to speak for the official Church or for all Christians.

Shriver was comfortable in our pluralistic society. He always collaborated with fellow citizens as citizens, regardless of denomination or religion or lack thereof.

“Religious values play[ed] an essential role” in Shriver’s life, Price and Melchin write, but he was not a proselytizer. Public positions stand on their own merit, not because some Christian (or Muslim or Jewish) leaders favor that position.

Finally, Shriver was well-informed. He thoroughly studied the issues. He knew Scripture and Catholic tradition, but he also knew that any policy or program had to fit the specific situation. Shriver kept in mind that people of good will can reach opposite policy conclusions.

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## Taking the Initiative

### *In Economics*

The prevailing type of global capitalism believes in an autonomous market, superior to societies and governments. That economy has lost our trust, says Pope Benedict XVI, because it operates solely on “commercial logic,” oblivious to repercussions on workers and families. (*Charity in Truth*, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$6)

Pope Francis says an individualistic economy kills. It results in “desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasure and a blunted conscience.” (*This Economy Kills* by Andrea Tornielli and Giacomo Galeazzi, Liturgical Press [2015]; \$19.95)

However, a corrective, based on “the principle of gratuitousness” and characterized by

“friendship, solidarity and reciprocity,” can emerge “within normal economic activity,” says Benedict XVI.

The Economy of Francesco ([www.francescoeconomy.org](http://www.francescoeconomy.org)) recently gathered about 1,000 young adult economists, entrepreneurs and change-makers from 21 countries. Some of those countries have regular Francesco chapters. (There is a U.S. network but no chapter here as yet.)

Pope Francis joined the young adults at their Assisi gathering to say: “It is not enough to make cosmetic changes. We cannot just wait until the next international summit. The earth burns today, and today we must change at all levels.” He then signed their Covenant, “The Economy of Francesco Pact.” It commits the young adults to take on the “responsibility that rests on our generation,” and make hard choices in our careers so that “the economy [envisioned during this gathering] becomes an economy of the Gospel.” Our plan, the young adults say, “is not a utopia, because we are already building it. And some of us, on particularly bright mornings, have already glimpsed the beginning of the Promised Land.”

The Economy of Francesco continues with international “villages” or committees that meet both in person and virtually. Each village acts on a specific topic, including business and peace, agriculture and justice, lifestyles, CO2 and inequality plus others. (*Vatican News* [9/24/22]; [www.vaticannews.va](http://www.vaticannews.va) and *Religion News Service* [9/26/22]; [www.religionnews.com](http://www.religionnews.com))

Meanwhile Ethics and Trust in Finance ([www.obsfin.ch](http://www.obsfin.ch)) is accepting nominations until May 29, 2023 for its ninth annual Prize for Sustainable Future.

Ethics and Trust also maintains an informative website with topics like exchange rates, hunger, digital currency, doing business in Russia and sustainable investing.

INITIATIVES welcomes reports from business schools that consider the market as a partner with the community and government and from parishes that support businesspeople in their social responsibility?

## **Taking the Initiative** *With Support Groups*

It’s seven A.M. on Friday and a small group files into the law office of Stephen Jackson (Shuttleworth, PO Box 2107, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406; [obj@shuttleworth.com](mailto:obj@shuttleworth.com)). They meet

nearly every week; now for the past 50 years. There were once 11, including a radio station owner, two clergy, a journalist, a social service administrator, two attorneys and others. Today, only five remain. The session lasts about one hour. The members take turns starting the discussion about “any issue born from their minds, emotions or spirit.”

Topics and practical situations include family life, business decisions and dealing with specific community issues. An article, which the members get in advance, can start the discussion.

The Cedar Rapids group is mostly Catholic and it welcomes religious language. However, it insists that the gathering not be a Bible study session.

Support groups are extremely valuable because our culture’s default presumption is ragged individualism, leaving few forums for honestly processing feelings, ethics, life decisions and the like. INITIATIVES thus welcomes reports from other support groups.

## **Taking the Initiative** *Assisting Migrants*

Welcoming refugees in urgent need of help is complicated; so is addressing the root causes of migration. How is it that one community of lay people takes on both challenges at once? That community is Sant’Egidio (380 Malcolm X Blvd. #6H, New York, NY 10027; [www.santegidiousa.org](http://www.santegidiousa.org)).

Sant’Egidio was begun in 1968, in the wake of Vatican II (1962-1965), headquartered in Rome, the very city that hosted that Council. The community engages in several local ministries and because of its global reach it can also address global problems like mass migration. Unlike groups that begin and end with an issue, Sant’Egidio puts its energy into long-term relationships, which allows it to develop new tactics for a very old issue.

Migrants face immense dangers traveling to a new country. They often pay large amounts of money to smugglers. Migrants often cannot secure the right to live in a new country until they have actually arrived in the new country. For example, people can only apply for asylum in the U.S. once on U.S. soil. As a result, migrants try to survive in a new country knowing that they may nonetheless need to return to the place they worked so hard to leave.

In Italy, Sant’Egidio collaborated with other civil society groups to open Humanitarian

Corridors which give migrants a safe path and a legal way to stay in a country, at least temporarily. The task is “long, unglamorous work,” reports Fr. Pat Gilger, SJ of Loyola University. Yet in recent months, Corridors has saved many Ukrainians fleeing the brutal attack on their country. (*Public Seminar* [4/18/22], New School, 66 W. 12<sup>th</sup> St., New York, NY 10011; [www.publicseminar.org](http://www.publicseminar.org))

It is safer to escort migrants in large groups. For example, in July 2022 Sant’Egidio with others welcomed 300 Afghan refugees in Italy. The migrants find temporary shelter with host families. Before knowing the decision of their asylum applications, they can stay in Italy on “humanitarian visas.” Sant’Egidio reports that from 2016 through 2021 more than 4,000 have come to Europe through the Corridors project.

Not content to only address the plight of those who have already left their homes, Sant’Egidio also engages in peacemaking activities. A civil war followed South Sudan’s 2011 split from the rest of Sudan. Sant’Egidio, present in Sudan since 1994, helped broker a peace agreement in 2020. Their work involved meeting with many groups in the region simply to hear their perspective. This sort of engagement within a country takes time, and Sant’Egidio knows that the peace agreement is delicate, needing careful attention to survive. (*National Catholic Reporter* [5/11/22], 115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111; [www.ncronline.org](http://www.ncronline.org))

Fortunately, continual involvement suits Sant’Egidio’s approach. Although the community can boast of certain accomplishments, like a peace agreement or the safe conveyance of migrants, its goals extend beyond newsworthy events. In whatever they do, the community always aims to develop lasting relationships. Without forsaking jobs or family, its members are available “to become a certain kind of person,” Gilger writes. The lynchpin of Humanitarian Corridors, after all, is the commitment on the part of ordinary people to welcome others into their lives for an indeterminate length of time. Similarly, the community’s president, Marco Impagliazzo, makes it clear that Sant’Egidio has no intention of abandoning the South Sudanese just because some progress has been made. Whether working with world leaders or weary refugees, Sant’Egidio’s method and goal are one and the same. Unlike Dives, its members look for and hear Lazarus. (*Luke* 16: 19-31) They “become friends with those the city has discarded” and in

time this friendship gives Sant’Egidio “a global imagination,” Gilger concludes.

## **Taking the Initiative** *In the Parish*

Back in the day Ed Marciniak (1917-2004), a principal NCL founder, along with your INITIATIVES’ editor spent time over many months walking the rim of the Loop. We wrote six demographic and thematic reports, each specific to a parish. The Loop is gradually expanding and that trend presents opportunities for the parishes, the reports say. Pastors and parish leaders need to be entrepreneurial in their relationships; to act locally while thinking big, in keeping with the Catholic principle of subsidiarity. (*The Future of Churches in the New Inner City*, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; free).

As is the case elsewhere, parishes in Chicago are merging or closing. Mary Mother of God (5500 N. Broadway, Chicago, IL 60640; [www.marymotherofgodchicago.org](http://www.marymotherofgodchicago.org)) is a new name for the recent combination of St. Ita, St. Thomas of Canterbury and St. Gregory churches. Its staff and leaders, led for the last six years by Fr. Bob Cook, OFM, are in full entrepreneurial mode.

Mary Mother of God is likely the most diverse Catholic parish in Chicago. Over 40 languages are spoken in the neighborhood, and Mass is celebrated in English, Spanish, Vietnamese/Lao plus a monthly Mass in the ancient Ge’ez rite for Eritrean Catholics. Throughout the year, its parishioners celebrate devotions and events unique to their Asian, African and Central/South American cultures.

Mary, Mother of God has a credit union, soup kitchen, food pantry, Canterbury House (an intentional community rooted in the spirituality of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day), and hosts a Catholic Charities refugee resettlement office. Mary, Mother of God strives “to create a parish that responds to the needs of our boundaries,” says Cook. It is a community based in Eucharistic spirituality, he adds.

St. Gregory Hall (5545 N. Paulina St., Chicago, IL 60640; [www.stgregoryhall.org](http://www.stgregoryhall.org)) is a recent innovation at Mary, Mother of God. Its purpose is to “promote Catholic culture through sacred art and music, theology and social teaching and a vibrant parish community.” There are book discussions, a short course on the Church Fathers, three artists-in-residence, a talk

late last year about Day's proposed sainthood, plus recitals and displays. (*Chicago Catholic*, 9/18/22)

The decline of its industrial base came later to Rochester than to other Great Lakes' cities. But the consequences are similar, including the closure or merger of parishes. (*The Atlantic* [8/21], 600 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20037 and *Concentration of Poverty*, Rochester Area Community Foundation, 500 East Ave., Rochester, NY 14607; [www.racf.org](http://www.racf.org))

Cathedral Community (296 Flower City Park, Rochester, NY 14615; [www.sacredheartrochester.org](http://www.sacredheartrochester.org)) is the amalgam of three west side parishes--Sacred Heart, Holy Rosary and Most Precious Blood. Fr. Kevin McKenna, former pastor of Cathedral Community and longtime NCL friend, tells about their entrepreneurial ministry in *Pope Francis and the Parish* (Paulist Press [2022]; \$19.95).

The "missionary option" is the key to a successful parish, McKenna says. It is not an "add-on to already established routines." Leaders, he writes, must accept that "the church is more than administration and rules." Thus, grounded in the Eucharist, a parish must experiment with giving Christ away. McKenna quotes St. John Chrysostom (347-407): "To honor the Body of Christ...do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad."

McKenna continues: "A key starting point for missionary engagement is a careful analysis of the demographics." The neighborhood was once populated by managers and factory hands from nearby employers. Due to plant closings many families moved away. But refugees and immigrants arrived from Myanmar, Bhutan, Vietnam, the Congo and elsewhere. Parish leaders "gathered to discuss the challenge" with a bias toward opportunity. They converted an abandoned rectory into Mary's Place, an outreach center, distributing food and clothing. Their service expanded to the point that the center obtained its own incorporation. Meanwhile, Cathedral Community joined an ecumenical food distribution group. As if those efforts were not enough, the parish started their own pantry, St. Joseph Place. It grew to include a community garden and a furniture distribution operation.

Cathedral Community, be assured, is not a social service agency. Its worship is the

spiritual foundation for work in the world. Likewise during the workweek, its community acquires a spirit that is brought into worship.

McKenna's book is also a commentary on *Joy of the Gospel*, a 2013 apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$8). This 150-page reflection introduced our entire church to Francis' best-known phrases: "go to the peripheries," "take on the smell of the sheep," we need "a church that is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets," too many Christians are "querulous and disillusioned pessimists, *sourpusses*."

Make relationships the priority; walk together, McKenna advises.

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## Work and Art

The Siena Center (Dominican University, 7900 W. Division St., River Forest, IL 60305; [www.dom.edu](http://www.dom.edu)) recently invited Judith Valente, former NCL board member, to speak on "What the World Needs Now Is Poetry." Here, edited, is some of what she said:

Some of the most beloved lines of American poetry come at the beginning of Walt Whitman's (1819-1892) anthem to life, *Song of Myself*:

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good  
belongs to you ...

These words get to the communal nature of poetry. When we gaze upon a painting, we usually stand alone. When we read a novel or a short story, we are alone with ourselves. Reading a poem, we are always in conversation with another person. The poet is our companion. If we reflect on the Latin root of the word companion--*cum pane*, with bread--we can say that we 'break bread' with both the poet and the poem. Poems are like what the ancient Celts called an *anam cara*, a soul friend. Like a good friend, the words of a poem will often come to us just when we need to hear from them.

The friendship of poems is particularly necessary in these times. With war in Ukraine, with the evident ravages of climate change, and a pandemic that keeps galloping across the globe, it can seem as if our world is undergoing a collective nervous breakdown. Not long after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins memorably commented, "At a time like this, people don't

ask, 'What short story should I read, or what film should I see.' They ask, 'Do you have a poem?'"

If we are lucky, poetry will find us too. I remember vividly that very moment in my life. I was listening to a transistor radio one evening in my family's cramped home outside New York City. I was eight or nine. The disc jockey read the poem *Recuerdo* by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), about taking a ride on a ferry. The poem begins:

We were very tired, we were very merry—  
We had gone back and forth all night on the  
ferry...  
And you ate an apple, and I ate a pear,  
From a dozen of each we had bought  
somewhere;  
And the sky went wan, and the wind came  
cold,  
And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of  
gold...

What sparked my child's imagination was how perfectly Millay described what I experienced riding the ferry between Manhattan and Staten Island. I could feel that cool wind on my face and smell the pungent, tarry scent of the water. I thought, whatever Millay is doing in that poem, I want to do. I want people to enter into my experience in the same way.

I like to say poetry changes *everything*. Poems are not only our companions in difficult times, they can also help us to heal.

*What the Living Do* by the wonderful contemporary U.S. poet Marie Howe begins with what most of us would describe as a bad day. It's winter. Her lips are chapped. The drain in her kitchen sink is clogged, the heat is on too high and she can't turn it off. Walking down the street with groceries, the bag breaks and the coffee in the cup she's carrying spills down her wrist and sleeves.

All this takes place, though, not long after Howe's younger brother Johnny has died of AIDS. At a certain moment in the poem, the poet stops. She realizes that these inconveniences, these petty annoyances, are the privileges of the living. As she describes it:

... There are moments, walking, when I catch  
a glimpse of myself in the window glass,  
say, the window of the corner video store,  
and I'm gripped by a cherishing so deep  
for my own blowing hair, chapped face, and  
unbuttoned coat that I'm speechless ...

Thus a poem born from grief becomes a celebration of life and love—a reminder that every day we are still alive is a good day.

My husband Charles Reynard was a state court judge for many years. He often said that the court's "juvenile days" were both the best and worst of his week. He was particularly affected by a young man we'll call Danny, who suffered abuse at the hands of his parents, once tried to swallow thumb tacks, often acted out violently and was prescribed an array of anti-depressants and anti-anxiety drugs. My husband tried to make sense of the teen's life and his own often futile efforts to salve the young man's pain in a poem called *Juvenile Day*. The poem ends with these moving lines:

Blessed son, I hold you my hand,  
so helpless to help, so blind to watch  
over you in your garden of griefs.

My husband also began a writing workshop for judges that became a regular part of our state's judicial continuing education program. It gave permission to the judges to express emotions that they keep locked inside.

The state of the world today is returning poetry to its rightful place in the public arena. The war in Ukraine has caused many to turn again to poetry. As Noura Mahmoud notes in *Foreign Affairs Review* ([www.foreignaffairsreview.com](http://www.foreignaffairsreview.com); 3/24/22), poets in Ukraine "took up their pens as soldiers took up their guns."

The Russian-speaking Ukrainian poet Lyudmyla Kheronsky's gets to the heart of the absurdity of war in *Hide Under the Blanket and Pull It Over Your Head*. The poem ends with these powerful lines:

...Turn your back to the war:  
now that it's behind your back, it can thrash  
and shred,  
you just close your eyes, pull the blanket over  
your head, stock up on bread,  
and when you just can't deal with caring for  
peace anymore,  
tear off some chunks, and when the night  
comes, eat what you've stored.  
(Translated and found in [www.poems.com](http://www.poems.com),  
4/22)

War is "a distortion of human life," Mahmoud writes, but *war poetry* "answers a need to report and a need to remember." That description could well apply to all poems. Poems that companion us, report on the world with a clear vision of the truth. They remind us what it means to be truly human.

## Labor Apostles

Bert Donlin (1910-1999) is among those profiled in *Go to the Worker: America's Labor Apostles* by Kim Baker (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$20). Donlin has great relevance now, especially in terms of the concept of vocation advocated by NCL founder, Ed Marciniak (1917-2004).

First and foremost, Donlin was a dyed-in-the-wool union guy. As chief steward of Chrysler UAW Local 7 (2600 Conner St., Detroit, MI 48215), he was the main representative on the shop floor. Were Donlin around today, you can bet he would raise Cain that union workers are now only about 10% of the U.S. workforce, and that U.S. legislative **provisions** to strengthen organized labor, especially those pertaining to the so-called “right-to-work states” (about half the total), face a grim future in Congress.

You can bet too that Donlin would be a leader in the current push to bring together unions, worker centers, and community groups to fight for every aspect of social justice.

Movement for the Common Good is one such effort. Its series of eight presentations identifies areas of concerted activism. ([www.nonprofitquarterly.org/series/building-a-movement-for-the-common-good](http://www.nonprofitquarterly.org/series/building-a-movement-for-the-common-good))

Presentation 1 makes a strong case for building the common good as the most effective strategy in this time of social crisis; only by worker organizations joining forces with their community partners can social justice prevail over plutocratic and autocratic trends.

Presentation 2 traces how the 2012 Chicago teachers strike gave impetus to the bargaining-for-the-common-good movement. It energized teachers plus partnerships of student, parent, and community groups.

Presentation 3 supports the effectiveness of the approach. It links worker-justice activism with efforts against racial injustice, health-care inequity, and attempts to weaken democracy. Cited as an inspiration, is the 2014 conference on the common good held by the Kalmanovitz Institute for Labor and the Working Poor ([www.lwp.georgetown.edu](http://www.lwp.georgetown.edu)).

Presentation 4 contends that successfully guaranteeing rights (whether worker, racial, civil, voting, or health care) requires that worker and community organizations build power together.

Presentation 5 calls for linking economic justice with ecological justice, as in the push by the UAW to make all U.S. vehicles electric and to strengthen its presence in the South, location of many automotive factories.

Presentation 6 advocates for coalitions against the shrinking of social services, as with Recovery for All ([www.recoveryforallct.com](http://www.recoveryforallct.com)).

Presentation 7 highlights the need for renewed labor organizing in higher education, which has become corporatized. A 2018 conference at Rutgers University supported the many campaigns in which student, labor, and community groups have broadened their common-good demands. New Labor (55 Paterson St. #200, New Brunswick, NJ 08901; [www.newlabor.org](http://www.newlabor.org)), a worker center, is an excellent example.

Presentation 8 focuses on the national trend whereby many corporate landlords and their investors oppose rent controls, protections from arbitrary and discriminatory evictions, and other efforts for safe and affordable places to live. Community groups, worker centers, and local and national labor unions are joining together to fight for justice in housing, as in Chicago in July 2019.

As we applaud the concept of bargaining for the common good, we can be thankful to Bert Donlin and other labor apostles in the past for laying the groundwork for today's activists. The energy and passion of Donlin and his cohort can inspire us to fight to the utmost for worker/social justice. Much help is needed.

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## The Great Workbench

“Since the dawn of modern offices, workers have orchestrated their actions by watching the clock. Now, more and more, the clock is watching them.” Jodi Kantor, Arya Sundaram, Aliza Aufrichtig and Rumsey Taylor make this observation in “The Rise of the Worker Productivity Score.” They add that the kinds of electronic surveillance already employed to track lower-paying workers, such as Amazon employees, Kroger cashiers and UPS drivers, are increasingly used to monitor white-collar and professional workers. These journalists relate stories of finance executives, therapists, social workers and hospice chaplains who are tracked, recorded, ranked and compensated based on quantitative productivity metrics.

Workers describe the relentless monitoring as “demoralizing,” “humiliating” and “toxic.” Just as concerning, they complain that the way these productivity metrics are used “are just wrong: inept at capturing offline activity, unreliable at assessing hard-to-quantify tasks and prone to undermining the work itself.” A hospice chaplain, burdened with the requirement of accruing “productivity points,” muses, “Do I see the patients who earn the points or do I see the patients who really need to be seen?” (*NY Times*, 8/14/22)

What is now called “surveillance capitalism” is increasing, writes Christopher Mims. Since the beginning of Covid-19 about one-third of small to medium sized companies have adopted surveillance technology. They join another third already using it. However, Mims reports, all this spyware can be counterproductive, adding to a company’s “morale-eroding micromanagement.”

Further, says Mims, the premise of the tech is wrong. Activity is not the same as productivity. He cites *Your Boss Is an Algorithm* by Antonio Aloisi and Valerio De Stefano (Hart Publications [2022]; \$29.95) to conclude that “there is no independent peer-reviewed research showing that [spyware] delivers on its promises.” (*Wall St. Journal*, 9/18/22)

In “The Boss Will See You Now,” Zephyr Teachout tells of employers reading employees’ e-mails, tracking their internet use and listening to their conversations. Such electronic surveillance, she states, “puts the body

of the tracked person in a state of hyper-vigilance, which is particularly bad for health, and worse when accompanied by powerlessness.” She gives examples of ubiquitous and intrusive monitoring that is demoralizing and dystopian. The dramatic expansion of corporate use of surveillance devices to track and control workers’ behavior, including by means of wearable tech devices and artificial intelligence, represents a further shift of the power balance away from workers and in favor of the employer.

The surveillance not only harms individual workers, says Teachout, a Fordham University law professor, its encroachment on freedom and privacy is a threat to democratic society. (*New York Review of Books* [8/18/22], 435 Hudson St. #300, New York, NY 10014)

Assessing workers’ productivity and performance remains a valid concern. However, given the extraordinarily far-reaching means of surveillance that employers now use, there is an urgent need to set appropriate limits that guarantee workers’ rights and dignity. As far back as the 1891 encyclical *On the Condition of Labor* by Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903), Catholicism has urged employers “not to look upon their workers as their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character.” Work is more than transactions and the worth of workers is measured by more than the number of clicks they can make on a keyboard.

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## INITIATIVES

Published for 44 years by National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629

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

The average teenager in the U.S. spends seven hours and 22 minutes in front of a screen each day. --From *Who’s Raising the Kids* by Susan Linn (The New Press [2022]; \$27.99)

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January 2023 #269

## **Happenings**

Since 1972 *The Chicago Reporter* (111 W. Jackson Blvd. #820, Chicago, IL 60604; [www.chicagoreporter.com](http://www.chicagoreporter.com)) has been an acclaimed newsletter on poverty and race. Like all advocacy newsletters, including INITIATIVES, *The Chicago Reporter* needs help these days. Thom Clark, longtime friend of NCL, and others have a fund to help it: Payable "Friends of The Chicago Reporter" (1927 W. Farwell Ave., Chicago, IL 60626).

Covid-19 forced the postponement of many conferences. Gradually, people are again meeting one another to influence our culture for the good. The Center for Social Concerns (University of Notre Dame, 274 Geddes Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556; <https://socialconcerns.nd.edu/cst2023>) resumes its semi-annual gatherings with a March 23-25 2023 conference, "Justice Sown in Peace." The conference will commemorate *Peace on Earth* by Saint John XXIII (1881-1963) on its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary and *The Challenge of Peace* by our U.S. Catholic Bishops on its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our NCL will have a hospitality table at the Notre Dame conference.

Obtain John XXIII's *Peace on Earth* encyclical from NCL (PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$5.50).