

<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>January 2024</p> <p>Number 275</p>
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Turn Toward the World

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) asserted that a “split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives [is] among the most serious errors of our age.” Yet nearly 60 years on, the split persists.

Unlike a sect that tries to maintain a pure distance from the established centers of culture, commerce and industry, Vatican II says Catholics are to be active within the human enterprise. This requires a refurbished notion of the laity whose essential credential is baptism. It commissions us to sustain and improve institutions by participating in office meetings, being active in local unions, agitating for better delivery of human services, managing a business with competency and decency plus hundreds of other mundane activities (from the Latin *mundanus*, belonging to the world). We do so as insiders to society and always allergic to injustice. Catholics are called to be salt and light in professions, occupations, community involvements and family life.

Why hasn't this vision caught on?

Kevin Ahern of Manhattan College says students arrive totally unfamiliar with Catholic social doctrine. They are unaware of the Catholic worldview and its sophisticated reflection on labor relations, on the economy and the environment, its guidelines for business ethics and more. Those students who do know something about Catholicism get their information by way of the culture wars. Their information is therefore likely faulty. (*NY Times*, 9/1/23)

So, unfamiliarity is a factor. It is though more of a symptom. Start with the fact that young adults do not meaningfully belong to a parish. It isn't even accurate to say “young adults are leaving in droves,” as if they are rejecting something to which they were once attached. Young adults are simply not interested in Catholicism one way or another.

Yes, there are sprouts here and there: maybe World Youth Day, an annual pro-life rally, a mission trip to Peru or Appalachia, Friday devotion or a Thursday evening Mass. The Holy Spirit might be moving within these

examples and others. However, the persistent and dominant trend is non-belonging.

Ellen Koneck of *Commonweal* magazine recently spoke on “Context and Concerns of Young Catholics” at the Common Ground Initiative (www.catholiccommonground.org).

Quit thinking about membership, she said. It “is not a particularly meaningful metric for understanding a young person’s beliefs or relationship to God or others.” Reviewing the statistics, Koneck asserted that young adults don’t trust institutions and, at least for now, are uninterested in sustaining them. Asked by a journalist what young adults are interested in, she replied: “Relationships.” (*National Catholic Reporter* [5/11/23], 115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111)

It feels like a contradiction: Young adults are not joiners but young adults want relationships. Yet there is an opening in Koneck’s remark. Young adults decidedly don’t want on-going institutional obligations. But sensitive young adults also feel our culture is vacuous. Some are fortunate to have a few friends in whom they confide and with whom they can laugh. They are grateful for workmates who share aspirations and frustrations.

We begin in the real world as we hope upon the world to become. Even though there are too many building inspectors in our real world and our church (people who find faults and perhaps condemn the enterprise), our hope is with our visionaries and entrepreneurs.

How can Catholicism be in the world of young adults, rather than presuming young adults will fit into today’s institutions? Examples from INITIATIVES’ readers are welcome.

Attention Readers

Perhaps you overlooked NCL’s appeal letter. Don’t worry. We can still accept your donation toward our 2024 budget. See page eight.

Taking the Initiative For Hospitality

After months of failed negotiations, Culinary Workers (www.culinaryunion226.org) and Bartenders Union (www.herelocal165.org) in Las Vegas reached a favorable agreement with 18 major hotels/casinos in November. (*NY Times*, 11/11/23)

Meanwhile, a template for wide cooperation in the hotel industry makes the rounds in Chicago.

Hospitality in our hotels and meeting facilities is “a fundamental civic virtue that links our residents with all our visitors” and contributes to “a culture of hospitality in Chicago,” says a remarkable June 2023 *Hospitality Charter*. It was drafted through a “solidarity” process among a number of “unlikely allies,” including Arise (www.arisechicago.org), a worker center, Mercy Home for Boys and Girls (www.mercyhome.org), a safe home for vulnerable children, Aquinas Literacy (www.aquinasliteracycenter.org), a tutoring program for immigrants, Unite Here (www.unitehere1.org), a union, Higgins Labor Program at Notre Dame (www.socialconcerns.nd.edu) and others from business and government—over 80 attended a culminating meeting.

The hospitality business is unlike some others in that it “is always and foremost a human encounter, a human interaction,” says the *Charter*. Hotel employees, company shareholders, hotel owners and managers, city officials, guests and Chicago citizens normally go about their day without constant awareness of one another. But the *Charter*’s process (with follow-up) is a reminder that all have a stake in the social cohesion and economic value created by tourism, business conferences, appointments and the like.

Relationships are prior to programs or issues. That’s why the process of this *Charter* is impressive. Months before the drafting meeting, three leaders made individual appointments with invitees. About 150 people were on an initial list of those likely to “discuss the challenges facing Chicago’s hospitality industry and to develop a shared vision for the future,” Fr. Cleve Kiley tells INITIATIVES. They came from “the faith community, labor, the hospitality and tourism industry, community-based organizations,

academia, the hospitality workforce, and government.”

The effort in Chicago is affiliated with International Catholic Migration Commission (www.icmc.net), headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and its program called “The Future of Work--Labor after Laudato Si.”

Taking the Initiative As Consumers

Ignatian Solidarity Network (1 John Carroll Blvd., University Heights, OH 44118; <https://ignatiansolidarity.net>), in cooperation with others, sponsors Catholic Ethical Purchasing Alliance for institutions that through their buying want to respect worker dignity and limit damage to our planet among other Catholic values. About a dozen universities and bookstores currently participate. The Alliance directs them to sportswear, coffee, beer glasses and more.

There are groups that guide individual consumers on the ethical content of various products. For example, Ethical Consumer (www.ethicalconsumer.org), based in England, recommends hundreds of products based on several criteria. Its extensive list includes cleaning supplies, food, batteries, computers, beer and more. It also has a long list of boycott campaigns, indicating the criteria for each.

Taking one’s ethics into the marketplace is admirable, but the task seems overwhelming. How can an individual evaluate scores upon scores of products? Are there really solid standards for choosing a product, for investing in a stock or for boycotting a company?

“Moral Saints,” a 1982 essay by Susan Wolf of University of North Carolina, is regularly assigned in undergraduate philosophy. It says perfectionism “is not a model of well-being.” A saint, in Wolf’s definition, is someone “whose every action is as morally good as possible.” She explains that such people are humorless because they avoid poking fun at others, the basis of many jokes. Such people have no private life because they are totally involved in serving others. There’s no time for sports or the arts.

Wolf does not advise callousness or moral relativism. She warns, however, that striving for a moral pinnacle is unhealthy and reaching it is impossible. (*The Variety of Values*, Oxford Press [2014]; \$74).

Catholicism, of course, defines a saint differently than Wolf. Catholic saints (with one exception) are sinners who nonetheless juggle priorities expertly, keeping God on top and knowing that compromises are necessary.

When it comes to shopping or investing, a Catholic is realistic. INITIATIVES, for example, currently favors Dunkin because Starbucks violates Catholic labor doctrine. INITIATIVES also chooses Gulf shrimp because of slavery in Thailand's fishing industry, though there is some improvement. How about INITIATIVES' readers? How do you make purchasing choices?

Taking the Initiative *With Fast Food*

The California Assembly passed and the governor signed a bill known as the Fast Act to establish sector bargaining in the fast food industry. It would establish a ten member council (from among employees, union representatives, industry executives, restaurant managers and consumer advocates) to oversee labor practices. Then in January 2023 an industry coalition (www.savelocalrestaurants.com) successfully put a proposition on the November 2024 ballot to halt the law's implementation. This tactic is common in California.

Talks between Service Employees International Union (www.seiuca.org) and California Restaurant Association (www.calrest.org) ensued. The two agreed to support a different Bill, #1228. It passed and was signed in September 2023. It repeals the Fast Act. It sets an industry-wide minimum wage at \$20. It absolves a franchise for workplace violations, putting the onus on individual franchisees. It also establishes a nine-member council to discuss issues in the future.

The California Senate followed with Bill #476 that requires companies to pay for employee food safety training. Previously employees had to pay for their "food handler card," obtained upon completion of ServSafe training. As it turns out, ServSafe is a program of National Restaurant Association (www.restaurant.org). Thus NRA member restaurants pay lower dues because in fact employees subsidize them. (*NY Times*, 1/26/23, 9/13/23 and 9/14/23)

The original Fast Act caught INITIATIVES' attention because it is a partial application of Catholicism's *industry council*

plan, sometimes called *works council* or *co-management* or *solidarism*. An industry council does not replace boards of directors, management or unions. It fosters self-regulation, reducing government meddling in favor of government cooperation with business. It is a quasi-public entity. It is an innovative way to increase worker participation. It is a collaborative and mutually accountable model of industrial organization. (See *Of a Divine Redeemer* [Paragraph 54] by Pope Pius XI, 1857-1939 and *Ed Marciniak's City and Church* [chapter three] by Chuck Shanabruch, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$23)

Taking the Initiative *With Furniture*

A practical exercise in charity is found a short distance from INITIATIVES' attic office. Chicago Furniture Bank (4801 S. Whipple St., Chicago, IL 60632; www.chicagofurniturebank.org) picks up donated furniture and displays it in its warehouse, where needy families can shop. The price tag on each piece is *free*.

CFB has corporate sponsors, including a major furniture chain. It also maintains a network of about 200 non-profit sponsors. Honest Junk Co., a companion effort, removes discarded wares from homes and business sites. Its profit is given to CFB.

In 2022 NCL's friends Pashk and Amanda Sokoli began Pennsylvania Furniture Mission (341 Chestnut St. #102, Columbia, PA 17512; www.pennsylvaniafurnituremission.org). It provides free furniture to the needy, thereby reducing furniture waste and creating some jobs. PFM has a pick-up service and makes some deliveries. It was awarded a United Way grant.

Taking the Initiative On Gig

“It’s difficult to determine how big the U.S. gig labor force is today, in part because gig work has so many different meanings,” writes Kellen Browning. (*NY Times*, 5/28/23)

Is gig work the same as part-time? Does it include a side-job, like mopping a grammar school after punching-out at the post office? Is it employment through day labor agencies like Manpower Group? Is it anyone who is self-employed?

Gig is most often associated with jitney drivers for Uber, Lyft and Bolt and with food delivery for Uber Eats, Grubhub, Door Dash and the like. By one estimate 16% of workers at times use an online platform to access jobs. If this is the model for gig work, then it means flexibility but also low pay and driver responsibility for fuel, maintenance and insurance. Sadly, it can also mean wage theft. For example, Uber and Lyft deliberately collected tax and fees from drivers rather than from riders. Each of about 100,000 drivers is now eligible for \$3,300 from a settlement. (*NY Times*, 11/3/23)

Restaurants in New York City count on app-based drivers to deliver \$1.7billion in food per month to homes, offices and schools. (Yes, \$1.7billion. Welcome to NYC.) A new law there (www.nyc.gov/dca) might improve the drivers’ situation. It stipulates that app-based delivery companies pay \$17.96 per hour, not including tips. The companies can mix-and-match factors to determine what counts as 60 minutes. Los Deliveristas Unidos (www.facebook.com/deliveristasunidos), a Brooklyn-based worker center, lobbied for this change. (*Chicago Tribune*, 6/15/23 and *Wall St. Journal*, 8/6/23 and *National Catholic Reporter* [10/12/23], 115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111)

Improvements for delivery drivers at the local level are difficult. At press time the New York law, for example, is in litigation. Then, there is the effort of Minnesota Uber/Lyft Drivers Association (www.mulda.net). It successfully lobbied for May 2023 state legislation that increases pay. But Gov. Tim Walz vetoed the bill, while forming a study committee. Then in August 2023 the drivers’ organization won a beneficial Minneapolis ordinance. However, it only covers Minneapolis, not trips that drift into St. Paul or to the airport or

mall in Bloomington. A further setback occurred within in days of the law’s passage. Mayor Jacob Frey vetoed it after he got Uber to agree in principle to a minimum wage for drivers. Lyft threatens to discontinue service if any pro-driver ordinance is passed. (*Star Tribune*, 5/25/23 and *NY Times*, 8/18/23 and *Minn Post* [8/22/23], 635 Ninth St. SE #220, Minneapolis, MN 55414; www.minnpost.com)

In late 2015 drivers in the Seattle area successfully lobbied for a law that allows them to bargain collectively. Again, that potential improvement has banged around courts ever since. (*Labor Notes* [2/16], 7435 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210)

In the meantime Seattle drivers in cooperation with the Teamsters (www.teamsters117.org) have won an ordinance that establishes a neutral resolution center for drivers with grievances. The city also has a wage floor for them--currently \$16.39.

It is back-and-forth at the federal level too. Which workers are considered employees and which are independent contractors? The Labor Department has a test. However, its interpretation fluctuates. The test has factors like worker control over a job or ability to increase pay by offering new services. Employees generally have less ability to modify an assignment than do independents. Though circumstances vary, a firm or company is less responsible under the *contractor* designation for benefits, wage scale, Social Security contribution and on grievances like wage theft or harassment. The federal labor bureau (www.nlrb.gov) recently nixed the language of “entrepreneurial opportunity” or “chance to earn more” from arguments that name a worker as a contractor. Stay tuned. (*NY Times*, 10/12/22 & 6/14/23)

Taking the Initiative For Families

Catholicism does not endorse a one-and-only pro-family social policy. The best principle is a *family wage*; aka, one job should be enough. However, as many in the working class, the middle class and in the upwardly-mobile class can attest, today’s market does not allow for a singular family wage sufficient to cover food, shelter, transportation, health care, children’s education, retirement savings and a modicum of leisure. So although the social obligation to healthy family life is best achieved through a family wage, says St. John Paul II

(1920-2005), wages can be supplemented “through other social measures such as family allowances.” (*John Paul II’s Gospel of Work*, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$6)

The family allowance program, as found in many countries, is an acknowledgment that children are a major social resource and that all of society is obliged to raise them. A monthly check comes either to all or to means-eligible families with children, no restrictions imposed. In various forms it has existed in Italy, France, Canada, Belgium, Ireland, Poland, Hungary, New Zealand, Spain and the United Kingdom among others.

The closest approximation to a family allowance in our country is Earned Income Tax Credit, enacted by Congress in 1975.

During the worst of Covid-19, U.S. households with children received a minimum of \$250 monthly, called Child Tax Credit. Their income was generally not an issue and families eligible for other federal benefits retained them. Congress allowed the Child Tax Credit to expire in 2022, even though the plan proved helpful and cost effective. For more information on the Child Tax Credit: Harris Public Policy (www.ucchicago.edu/brucemeyer) and Center on Poverty and Social Policy (www.columbia.edu).

Since the end of CTC, some locales are experimenting with a modified plan called *universal guaranteed income*, as a way to increase economic participation.

In its experiment Rochester, NY awards \$500 per month for one year to about 350 families that fall 185% below the poverty line; that is, less than \$55,500 for a family of four. The city gets the money from a portion of its allocation under the American Rescue Act Plan (www.whitehouse.gov/american-rescue-plan). A local parish, Spiritus Christi (www.spirituschristi.org) helps the city identify applicants. Non-profit groups likewise help Durham, NC (www.durhamnc.gov) administer its basic income program. Since 2019 Stockton, CA (www.stocktondemonstration.org) has assisted some families with a basic income check. The city administration here in Chicago is looking to fund a guaranteed income experiment. (*Democrat & Chronicle*, 6/16/23 and *Chicago Sun Times*, 10/21/23)

The Wilson Sheehan Lab at University of Notre Dame (www.leo.nd.edu) evaluates these and other anti-poverty strategies. For more information on experiments with basic income: Income Movement (725 NE Jessup St., Portland, OR 97211; www.incomemovement.org) and

Economic Security Project (228 Park Ave. S. #PMB 32482, New York, NY 10003; www.economicsecurityproject.org).

Taking the Initiative

With Immigrants/Refugees

“Recognizing the Stranger” is a relationship-building process for immigrant parishes developed by West Southwest IAF (704 E. Wonsley Dr. #200, Austin, TX 78753; www.swiaf.org), which is part of the 84-year old Industrial Areas Foundation. Participants are schooled on how to listen to one another and how to act on behalf of others. In late 2022 a delegation from Texas met with Pope Francis to explain the process. There is now a six minute video about it on the website.

“The Border Is Everywhere” is a response by Catholic Charities USA (2050 Bellenger Ave. #400, Alexandria, VA 22314; www.catholiccharitiesusa.org) to the increased number of refugees in our country. The program can help local Charities’ offices and others coordinate their efforts to assimilate refugees.

INITIATIVES recently visited Forging Opportunities for Refugees in America (6431 N. California Ave., Chicago, IL 60645; www.refugeefora.org). It is a “high dosage” tutoring program for the children of refugees from Burma, Afghanistan, Syria and elsewhere. The students come voluntarily, even in summer. The tutors include a few old hands plus an impressive corps from Loyola University (1032 W. Sheridan Dr. #Damen 217, Chicago, IL 60660; www.luc.edu/serve). FORA is supported by individual donors, a few foundations and religious groups—no government money. Look for a report in a future INITIATIVES on FORA’s new facility, previously an abandoned library.

Taking the Initiative

In the Parish

Vatican II (1962-1965) produced 16 documents that now ground Catholicism’s theology and pastoral practice.

St. Victoria (8228 Victoria Dr., Victoria, MN 55386; www.stvictoria.net) hosts ten monthly sessions through June 2024 on those documents. Each, led by an area expert, takes place on a Saturday morning.

St. Mary of the Lake (4690 Bald Eagle Ave., White Bear Lake, MN 55110;

www.stmarys-wbl.org) hosts six evening sessions on themes from Vatican II, including one on the Social Mission of the Church.

Deacon Ray Ortman of St. Victoria notes that Pope Francis desires a renewed “interest in the teachings and the pastoral implications of Vatican II.” The Council is “really the key,” he says, to how the people of God conduct themselves “in the modern world.” (*The Catholic Spirit*, 9/12/23)

For those who can't go to Minnesota, INITIATIVES recommends a small book, *Vatican II* by Shaun Blanchard and Stephen Bullivant (Oxford Press [2023]; \$11.95) or *Vatican II [Six] Essential Texts* (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$5 in limited quantity). To learn more about the relevance of Vatican II, INITIATIVES also recommends two documents by Pope Francis: *On the Liturgical Formation* (Paulist Press [2022]; \$15.95) and *On the Climate Crisis* (Our Sunday Visitor [2023]; \$8.95).

Labor Apostles

Fr. Philip Carey, SJ (1907-1989) came along a bit later than most of the other labor apostles profiled in Kim Baker's *Go to the Worker* (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$21). In 1938, the year of Carey's ordination, he began a two-year teaching internship in New York City. The school adopted a totally labor-centered curriculum that year, a development which fit perfectly into the young priest's major career goal—bettering the lot of workers.

This regular INITIATIVES' column has observed several times that the life goal of many Catholic activists of that era came out of their formation in working-class families. They experienced firsthand the injustices of the industrial economy. Carey fits this observation.

For decades before the union boom of the 1930s, his dad, John, was a conductor on NYC's 35th St. trolley. Its employees had no lunch hour and got only two days off per year. Working conditions were so unsafe that John fell down an unprotected stairway and was hospitalized for a year, then ended up with no compensation because a transit official absconded with the disability funds. The company wouldn't pay up. Pre-1930s attempts to unionize were defeated by strikebreakers, and the Carey family was reduced to living off “tea

and toast.” It was “bread and water with a little coloration,” Fr. Carey said.

Personal histories like this one played a key role in bringing about labor improvements in the 1930s and 1940s and the accompanying Catholic social action movement, which acted widely and ecumenically in an era when workers were organizing rapidly and Communist organizers were influential. Personal histories like those of the Carey family are again being bravely lifted up by renewed worker justice activism, Catholic and ecumenical.

There is no greater proof of this assertion than what happened recently when the United Auto Workers (www.uaw.org)—a union which was in the middle of labor activism of the 1930s and 1940s—successfully concluded a major strike against the three major U.S. automakers. A highlight of the strike was the appearance on its picket line of President Joseph Biden, a first in U.S. history.

Carey became director of Xavier Labor School in 1940. His behavior there, particularly during a huge NYC waterfront strike, was so outstanding that it became the subject of a 1954 Academy Award movie entitled *On the Waterfront*. Of course, the priest who was a major character in the movie was a composite of Carey and his Xavier Labor School assistant Fr. John “Pete” Corridan, SJ (1911-1984). Corridan was a gregarious figure who circulated among the dockworkers, listening to and encouraging them. The more reserved Carey helped workers who came into the labor school office for support. Both priests deserve recognition and praise for their behavior during the strike, and for their several decades of activism to improve collective bargaining.

Strikes became uncommon in the U.S. when President Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) crippled the Professional Air Traffic Controllers following their 1981 strike. The drama is eloquently described in *Collision Course* by Joseph McCartin (Oxford Press [2011]; \$21.99).

But the strike tactic is making a comeback, as the UAW and other recent job actions demonstrate, though the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act remains an obstacle especially in so called “right-to-work” states—a misnomer.

Let the beacons of light prompt all of us to become stronger in our worker justice beliefs and actions. Take note of the encouraging decisions within the National Labor Relations Board (www.nlrb.gov), including with its general counsel Jennifer Abruzzo. (*Commonweal*

[11/23], 475 Riverside Dr. #244, New York, NY 10115)

Next up in this series of labor apostles is Msgr. George Higgins (1916-2002).

Rest in Peace

Sr. Patricia Crowley, OSB (1939-2023)

Crowley was prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Chicago from 2007-2015. Her leadership skills were evident from the moment she entered the order in 1958. She taught in two Chicago-area grammar schools and then for 12 years at St. Scholastica High School with classes in English, French and theology.

In the 1980s she was the director of Howard Area Community Center (www.howardarea.org), with its array of social services. In her “free time,” Crowley accompanied her mother, Patty Crowley (1913-2005), on Sunday visits to women in jail. The two also were attuned to the situation of

homeless women. In early 1985 they, with others, founded what became Deborah’s Place (www.deborahsplace.org). Crowley became the director. It now has 200 apartments for formerly homeless women.

Crowley then founded and/or served several other efforts to deal with homelessness, including Bethany House (www.bethanyhouseofhospitality.com). Run by women religious, it provides transitional housing for refugee women and children.

Crowley was a long-time friend of our National Center for the Laity. She participated in NCL events and gave editorial advice to some NCL publications, including a booklet about her mother. In the forward to NCL’s *Church Chicago Style* (\$9), Crowley wrote that Chicago’s contribution to Catholicism is an “amazing reality...[NCL’s] innate love of and dedication to lay leadership bespeaks my own experience.”

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

NCL’s objectives are to:

- Prompt discussion of church-laity-world as proclaimed by Vatican II (1962-1965).
- Facilitate people and institutions in the search for a spirituality that grows out of daily occupations and professions.
- Agitate and assist parishes, schools and agencies as they support the connection between Christian life and work—on the job, around the home and in the community.
- Maintain a center of information on the Christian in the world; specifically by publishing INITIATIVES and by assisting writing and research on the church and world.

Children in the U.S. spend seven hours per day looking at a screen, including about 45 minutes inside their school. The overall U.S. population on average spends eight hours a day on a screen.

“The medium [not the content] is the message.” –Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)

