

<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>September 2024</p> <p>Number 279</p>
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Turn Toward the World

Catholicism does not baptize either of today's big ideologies. In fact, "from its earliest days, Catholic social teaching forged a middle path between free-market libertarianism and socialist collectivism," explains Anthony Annett in *Commonweal* (475 Riverside Dr. #244, New York, NY 10115; 4/24).

Catholicism opposes collectivism (aka command/controlled economy or totalitarianism or economic determinism) because it puts the state ahead of persons. Catholicism opposes libertarianism (aka neo-liberalism or ragged individualism or cowboy capitalism) because it puts capital ahead of persons.

The Catholic starting point is the innate dignity given by God to each person, irrespective of wealth or talent or glamour quotient. God's dignity supersedes the attitude of one's boss. It precedes legal status or one's friendship with a bishop or political leader. It is prior to one's place of employment or to today's market closing.

Personalism, sometimes called *communalism*, is one name for Catholic socio-economic philosophy. Its proponents include Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), St. John Paul II (1920-2005) and Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), a founder of *Esprit*, a personalist journal.

For Mounier a person is different from an individual. Individualism believes in the self-made woman or man who desires *freedom from*. Personalism believes that true freedom is gained through engagement. It is *freedom for*.

The impulse to make a difference with others is Christian in itself, Mounier explains. Spirituality, he adds, must guide anyone's turn toward the world.

Mounier warns that some can confuse spiritual renewal with "the clattering of spirit about spirit." Though perhaps sincere, such people reduce Christianity to "moralizing sentiment." They have "too exclusive a concern for the correctness of individual behavior," presuming that Christianity is only ethics.

Then too some Christians want their action to be totally pure because they "wish to act [without] soiling one's hands." Similarly,

some Christians sit on the bench because they want assurance that their action will be effective. They won't admit that repairing the world is spiritual, even in cases where the result is less than paradise. "Action is not judged [exclusively] by the accomplishment," says Mounier. Its results include "the edification" of those who act, "the development of [their] ability, of [their] virtues [and] of [their] integrity."

Don't be discouraged by those aligned with individualism. If only 2% have a positive perspective, personalism says, and if the 2% have requisite public skills and genuine faith, such a committed group can move a mountain or reform a society. (*Matthew* 17:20)

For more from Mounier, still in print is *Personalism* (University of Notre Dame Press [1949]; \$25) and *Be Not Afraid* (Clung Media [1946]; \$22.95). St. John Paul II contributed to the personalist journal, *Esprit*. His personalist disposition comes through in *John Paul II's Gospel of Work* (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$8). For more on personalism, get *The Catholic Worker Movement: [Its] Origins* by Louise and Mark Zwick (NCL; \$14).

Attention Readers

Soon look in your mailbox for NCL's 2025 budget appeal. Your kindness has kept NCL in business for 46 years. Expenses, as you realize, are up.

Taking the Initiative

On Labor Day

The first Labor Day parade was held in 1882, in New York City. It was sponsored by the Knights of Labor. Its organizers were two Catholics. Though not related, they shared the same last name. Matthew McGuire (1855-1917) was a machinist from New Jersey; Peter McGuire (1852-1906), working in Chicago at the time, was a carpenter. In 1894 Labor Day became a national holiday and was set on the first Monday of September.

St. Joseph, also a carpenter, is associated with Labor Day in round-about fashion. The saga begins here in Chicago where on May 1, 1886 a federation of labor unions began a campaign for an eight-hour workday. A subsequent rally in our Haymarket area turned violent when someone threw a stick of dynamite. Police then fired wildly into the crowd. Four workers and seven police died. Seven workers were sentenced, four of whom were hanged in November.

In July 1889 several European countries designated May 1st as Labor Day to honor the Haymarket workers. (Illinois Labor History Society; www.illinoislaborhistory.org)

In 1956, to offset the Communist influence on Europe's Labor Day Pope Pius XII (1876-1958) established May 1st as the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. Some U.S. bishops immediately asked to observe the new feast on the first Monday of September in our country only. Permission was granted, but nonetheless the May 1st date for St. Joseph took hold in the U.S.

Ed Marciniak (1917-2004), a principal founder of our NCL, saw in the two dates a significant difference in worldviews. People in the U.S. "have never developed a strong class consciousness," as did those in communist-influenced Europe, he wrote. Working families in Europe drifted away from Catholicism because Church officials there and in Latin America got too much "in league with the wealthy against the poor." By contrast, U.S. Catholicism "has never had...a hostile working

class." (Since 1968 many Catholics in our country have left the church behind. They walked away out of indifference, not economic or political hostility.)

An economic system predicated on "class struggle...will be inadequate and distorted," Marciniak concludes. So maybe having two dates in our country (May 1st and first Monday in September) contains a hidden blessing. (Learn more about Marciniak in *Ed Marcinaik's City and Church*, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$20).

Taking the Initiative

In Fast Food

As of this past April, fast food workers in California get \$20 minimum. This increase is the result of a first-ever process. In 2022 the state legislature (AB 257) established a Fast Food Council (www.dir.ca.gov). At first, some trade groups, including International Franchise Association (www.franchise.org) supported the idea. However, much public debate ensued. Now the governor has signed the law and approved the Council's initial recommendations.

The \$20 minimum applies to those restaurants with limited table service. Plus they must belong to a national chain that has at least 60 establishments. Keep in mind that about 40% of fast food workers are given less than 35 hours per week on the clock. (*Chicago Tribune*, 4/2/24 and *The Nation* [6/24], 520 Eighth Ave., New York, NY 10018)

INITIATIVES is interested in this story because the arrangement in California is a partial application of Catholicism's industry council plan. INITIATIVES is likewise following a proposal for nail salons in New York and for nursing homes in Minnesota.

This Catholic idea gained some traction in Europe but until now enjoyed quite limited attention in the U.S. The industry council plan is a way to have fair and peaceful labor relations by bringing employees and owners together without choking competition. The plan, please note, does not replace collective bargaining. The members of a council, in addition to management and employee representatives, might include government officials, consumers and community activists. Some members may be designated as non-voting and some topics might be labeled off-limits. The council's underlying goal is to improve commerce.

The economic challenge is to restore partnership or participation in a culture premised on extreme individualism. Ed Marciniak put it this way: Catholicism seeks participation, but not one of “benevolent paternalism, rather a real partnership in which working [people] will become co-responsible with management in solving economic problems.”

For more on the industry council plan, get *Ed Marcinaik's City and Church* (NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$20).

Taking the Initiative

Among Drivers

During a recent visit, INITIATIVES could not hail a Lyft or an Uber in Minneapolis. A March 2024 city ordinance requiring \$15.57 minimum for jitney drivers was in effect and in retaliation Lyft and Uber discontinued business in the Mill City.

Back in June 2023 Minnesota Uber/Lyft Drivers (www.mulda.org) lobbied for an increased wage. Minneapolis approved, though neither St. Paul nor the airport in Bloomington was covered. Wrangling at the state and municipal levels ensued. Finally, the Minnesota legislature passed an acceptable bill to cover the entire state. The new formula eliminates a fixed hourly minimum, replacing it with \$1.28 per mile plus 31 cents per minute. A ten mile trip could yield about \$16; a short trip something less. (*Chicago Sun Times*, 5/21/24)

Meanwhile, a nearly five year dispute between Uber/Lyft and the Massachusetts Attorney General (www.mass.gov) is settled. The app-based companies will pay \$175million to settle violations of Massachusetts labor law. They also agree to a \$32.50 per hour wage for ride time. There is also a provision for accident insurance and a health insurance option. However, the settlement perpetuates the classification of drivers as independent contractors, not employees. Get more information from Shannon Liss-Riordan (Lichten and Liss-Riordan, 729 Boylston St. #2000, Boston, MA 02116). (*NY Times*, 6/29/24)

Keep in mind that drivers classified as independent pay for their gas and maintenance, and at least some portion of their insurance. They are not paid for idle time, waiting for a hit on their mobile device. For more information on these and other issues, check out Justice for App Workers (<https://justiceforappworkers.org>).

Taking the Initiative

In Labor Law

This past June the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago (<https://clgchicago.wildapricot.org>) held a forum on the dignity of labor. Participants included lawyers, union leaders, public officials, teachers and students.

Tom Geoghegan (www.dsgchicago.com), longtime NCL friend, was a panelist. He noted the renewed public interest in unions. However, surveys and press attention alone are a long way from what is required to allow for thriving unions, he continued. Geoghegan favors changing the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. This would require more democracy in Congress; in particular amending filibuster rules. Unions too must change, including mandatory rank and file voting for officers, he said. (A limited number of Geoghegan's classic *Trying to Be for Labor* is available from out NCL; \$7 each.)

Sarah Lyons of Unite Here (<https://unitehere1.org>) and Roushaunda Williams of Illinois AFL-CIO (www.ilaflio.org) described the *Hands Off, Pants On* campaign. It started with a survey that revealed the extent of sexual harassment of hotel maids by customers. Months upon months of building their case and lobbying officials resulted in an ordinance and legislation that protects the maids and assists the hotel managers.

The history of Catholic doctrine on labor relations was covered by two NCL friends, Dan Graff of Higgins Labor Program (<https://socialconcerns.nd.edu>) and Adrienne Alexander of AFSCME (www.afscme31.org).

Denise DeBelle (www.debelle-law.com) volunteered many hours over several months to bring this Lawyers Guild forum to reality.

The inclusivity of the Chicago event reminds INITIATIVES of the last remaining Catholic labor school, Boston Labor Guild (66 Brooks Dr., Braintree, MA 02184; www.laborguild.com). It will celebrate its 80th anniversary next year. Its current chaplain is NCL friend, Fr. Marc Fallon, CSC, who followed Fr. Patrick Sullivan, CSC (1929-2024). It is supported by dues from institutions and individuals. (INITIATIVES is a 40-year member.)

The Labor Guild holds regular classes and workshops on topics like negotiations, labor

history, stewardship training, parliamentary procedure and other public skills. Catholic principles are weaved throughout. The Guild also publishes an informative newsletter, *Labor Life*.

In the field of labor relations business executives, lawyers, government officials and community activists often meet in adversarial roles. The inclusive nature of the Labor Guild, however, allows these people to encounter one another as servants of the common good. This is particularly evident at the Labor Guild's annual awards banquet where individuals from various fields are acclaimed by the whole.

Taking the Initiative *For Adult Formation*

Dehkhoda Educational Foundation (www.dehfoundation.org) recently opened the world's first International Servant Leaders' Museum in Morton Grove, IL. Its exhibits and events focus on aspects of love, peace, progress, and prosperity for all. It is a meeting place for learning and inspiration about the practice of servant leadership through the stories of leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Goodall, Abraham Lincoln, Mohammad Mossadegh, Frederick Douglass, Cesar Chavez, Ida B. Wells, Nelson Mandela, Malala Yousafzai, Mother Jones, Anne Frank, and Sophie Scholl. Collectible items on display include paintings, autographed pictures and books, original manuscripts, and other items of museum quality.

Dehkhoda also hosts cultural, artistic musical and culinary events to inspire and promote servant leadership. A recent event, co-sponsored by Vision Morton Grove and Cook County United Against Hate (www.cookcountyunitedagainsthate.com), featured a documentary on a community coming together in solidarity after a hate crime at a Sikh Temple. Sikhs, Jews, Christians and others were among those participating in a follow-up discussion.

Dehkhoda founders Hamid Akbari and Azar Khounani, a married couple, were born and raised in Iran and came to the U.S. in the late 1970s. Their efforts in education led them to a passionate belief in the power of forums for societal change. The foundation honors Ali Akbar Dehkhoda (1879-1956), an Iranian scholar, political activist, poet and humanitarian, who dedicated his life to the social, economic, and political well-being of all people.

Individualism and polarization plague our society. Those viruses drive out forums for dialogue (which includes civil debate). Dehkhoda Foundation is one example of servant leaders signaling hope and inspiration.

Taking the Initiative *Inside a Big-Box Store*

There are many ways the written word can be employed to combat social ills--economic manifestos, social satires, muckraking journalism, papal encyclicals. Perhaps the most effective weapon for reform is the novel that portrays and critiques the social structures and conditions of its time. Think of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) and Victor Hugo (1802-1885) in England and France. Or consider Upton Sinclair (1878-1968) and John Steinbeck (1902-1968) in the U.S.

In the novel *Help Wanted* (W.W. Norton [2024]; \$28.99) Adelle Waldman shows the cost that desperately trying to make a living has on people. A reader gets a behind-the-scenes look at the night-shift crew that empties trucks of merchandise and stocks the shelves of a big box store. Other employees call them "roaches" because they descend on the store in the dark of night and scatter at eight in the morning when the customers arrive.

Waldman exposes the reality of what many bottom level employees experience today. The novel is humane and often funny, but also angry in its incisive portrayal of the cruelty of a corporate system that leaves low-wage workers trapped and frustrated at every turn. Even one of the middle managers—slightly better off than his subordinates--still is not able to afford a house down payment. He recognizes his store's "willingness to cheat employees in any way that was technically not illegal (and call it 'performing its fiduciary duty to the stockholders.')

The rise of globalization, digital retail, automation, deregulation and artificial intelligence are affecting the workforce dramatically. Statistics and charts are ways of illustrating the effects of these changes; another is creating believable characters and showing the real-life impact of the new economy on them. As Waldman unfolds the stories of the big-box store night crew (called "team members"), readers get a visceral sense of how these factors contribute to entrapment in a kind of serfdom.

A retailer may entice customers with a rallying cry, “Save Money. Live Better.” But those bargain prices are not without a human cost.

Walmart has about 4,700 stores in the U.S., none of which has a union. United Food and Commercial Workers (1775 K St. NW, Washington, DC 20006; www.ufcw.org) has a “Making Change at Walmart” campaign. For now, it assists employees with research and legal information. Costco employees are members of the Teamsters (25 Louisiana Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001; <https://teamsters.org>). Management and the union regularly cooperate. The Teamsters, by the way, recently opened an Amazon Division. (*Labor Notes* [7/24], 55 Washington St. #522, Brooklyn, NY 11201)

Taking the Initiative

Making Saints

“Radical Action: Tracing Dorothy Day” is a collection of mosaics by Kristi Pfister (www.kristipfisterartist.com). It was recently exhibited at the Dorothy Day Center of Manhattan College (4513 Manhattan College Pkwy. #MGL 207, Riverdale, NY 10471).

Pfister learned about Dorothy Day (1897-1980) about 20 years ago when she was commissioned to paint a mural in Brooklyn’s Bed-Stuy neighborhood. Since then, Pfister has spent considerable time making Day better known to the public. Pfister looks forward to Day’s official sainthood.

INITIATIVES already considers Day a saint. She is, for us, the patroness of U.S. Catholic advocacy journalism.

Day was many things: a friend to the poor, a convener of idealists, a mother, and a speaker. However, she thought of herself primarily as a journalist. At age 11 she was reporting for an intra-family newsletter. By age 22 she was “firmly committed to effecting social change through her journalism,” writes Nancy Roberts in *Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker* (SUNY Press [1984]; \$34.95). Day’s consistent vocation was reporting and writing.

Contact Pfister for an opportunity to exhibit the artwork. To keep current on Day’s official canonization, it is Dorothy Day Guild (1011 First Ave. #787, New York, NY 10022; www.dorothydayguild.org). The latest biography is *Dorothy Day: Radical Devotion* by Jeffrey O’Dell Korgen and Christopher Cardinale (Paulist Press [2024]; \$16.95). For more on the

Manhattan College Center, get *American Catholic Studies* (c/o Sheridan Press, 450 Fame Ave., Hanover, PA 17331; Summer/24)

North American Spirituality

Mary “Mother” Jones (1830 [or 1837]-1930)

Historians adopted the term *Gilded Age* from the title of a Mark Twain novel (written with Charles D. Warner) to characterize the excessive materialism and political corruption of the late 19th century. It was a time of rapid economic growth and industrialization, but at the cost of grinding exploitation of workers, lax workplace safety standards and child labor. The intolerable conditions gave rise to the U.S. labor movement. (*Gilded Age* [1873], Sea Wolf Press; \$14.95)

Fight Like Hell (Bull Frog Films [2022]; \$24.95 DVD) presents the first-person story of Mother Jones who played a pivotal role in igniting and sustaining the long battle for workers’ rights. Kaiulani Lee wrote and performs the one-woman play based on the legendary labor organizer’s autobiography, letters, speeches and interviews. It brings to life the story, not just of a woman of dauntless courage, but of the sacrifices that she inspired in thousands of ordinary workers and their families in the fight for dignity and economic justice.

Assuring workers that poverty is not a sin and wealth is not a sign of moral goodness, Jones called them to be conscious of their dignity, to overcome fear and to stand together against the brutal conditions imposed upon them. For her success in organizing mine workers she earned the label, “the most dangerous woman in America.” She also earned, without being charged or tried, months of solitary confinement. In the face of this and many setbacks to the movement, she remained undeterred.

The labor movement met numerous violent and crushing defeats at the hands of mine owners, industry and the government, but it eventually did lead to childhood labor legislation, the eight-hour workday, the establishment of a minimum wage, improved standards of workplace safety, and the right to organize as a collective.

Maybe there should be a special class of sainthood for blessed firebrands like Jones “who suffer persecution for justice’s sake.” Her example could serve to inspire us today as we face the challenges of this Second Gilded Age of growing wealth disparity and economic injustice.

We should heed her famous call, "Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living!"

Jones' funeral was held on December 8, 1930 (Immaculate Conception feast) at Ascension Church (705 E. Main St., Mt. Olive, IL 62069). She is buried nearby at the only union-owned cemetery in the U.S. A biography is titled *Mother Jones: the Most Dangerous Woman* by Elliott Gorn (Macmillan [2002]; \$20). A website is www.motherjonesmuseum.org.

Work and Art

Have you heard the one about a pope and the comedians? Well...it happened this past June when Pope Francis hosted a reception for 105 comedians from 15 countries. Most were from Italy. Some were Catholic, some not. The U.S. delegation included Jim Gaffigan, Stephen Colbert, Conan O'Brien, Jimmy Fallon, Whoopi Goldberg and others.

"I hold you in high esteem as artists who express yourselves through the language of comedy," Francis told the group. "In the midst of so much gloomy news, immersed as we are in many social and even personal emergencies, you have the power to spread peace and smiles... You are among the few who have the ability to speak to all types of people, from different generations and cultural backgrounds... You unite people, because laughter is contagious. It is easier to laugh together than alone: joy opens us to sharing and is the best antidote to selfishness and individualism... Playful fun and laughter are central to human life, to express ourselves, to learn, and to give meaning to situations." (*NY Times*, 6/14/24 & *Chicago Tribune*, 6/16/24)

Francis shared a prayer, often though wrongly attributed to St. Thomas More (1478-1535): "Grant me, O Lord, good digestion, and also something to digest. Grant me a healthy body, and the necessary good humor to maintain it. Grant me a simple soul that knows to treasure all that is good and that doesn't frighten easily at the sight of evil, but rather finds the means to put things back in their place... Allow me the grace to be able to take a joke and to discover in life a bit of joy, and to be able to share it with others. Amen."

Two reflections on humor and faith, each from Jesuits who have the same last name: *What's So Funny About Faith* by Fr. Jacob Martin, SJ (Loyola Press [2012]; \$13.95) and

Between Heaven and Mirth by Fr. James Martin, SJ (Harper One [2012]; \$17.99).

Rest in Peace

Fr. William Byron, SJ (1927-2024)

Byron was among those Catholics who developed ethical guidelines for modern business. He wrote, taught and gave countless talks on that topic.

In *Power of Principles: Ethics for the New Corporate Culture* (Orbis Books [2006]; \$24), Byron matches management concepts to Catholic social doctrines. For example, to delegate responsibility is to observe Catholicism's principle of subsidiarity. Of course, corporations must observe contract justice and legal justice. But, Byron asserts, excellent managers also attend to the virtue of social justice "which looks to all members of a [business] group, hopes for a group initiative and expects a group response to a genuine need."

INITIATIVES once asked Byron "what it would take to integrate the church's social mission into the daily habits (mind, spirit and behavior) of Catholic business executives, citizens, union officials, social workers, politicians, educators" and the like? Your National Center for the Laity is onto something when it calls for a "Monday into Sunday" approach, he replied. The more familiar thinking is to apply Sunday faith in weekday jobs and family life. The intriguing image suggested by NCL "is an offertory procession that starts on Monday and moves through the full workweek on up to a Sunday opportunity to place one's gift at the altar and offer liturgically expressed praise and thanks to God... NCL sees opportunities for growth in faith while being absorbed in the world of work... Admittedly that's a bit of a challenge." (See Byron's *Individuation Observations*, distributed by University of Chicago Press [2007]; \$20)

Rest in Peace

Nelvin Vos (1933-2024)

Ministry, wrote Vos, "is not something we go out and do, but rather something we do as we go."

Vos was a longtime teacher and administrator at Muhlenberg College in Allentown (<https://muhlenberg.edu>), a school connected with the Evangelical Lutheran Church

in America. He taught literature and was involved with the theater program.

For many years NCL sponsored an annual conference with a like-minded Protestant group in which Vos was a leader. NCL is disappointed that the Vatican II (1962-1965) vision for Christians in the world hasn't fully caught-on. Vos, often referencing Vatican II, shared NCL's frustration, noting that the same shortfall afflicts Protestant denominations. Even though Martin Luther (1483-1546) taught about the priesthood of all believers, most Protestants today wait for cues from their minister, Vos felt.

The misuse of common terms has repercussions. Today the word *laity* connotes second-class. Not so in the Bible where it means *all the people of God*, said Vos. The outdated misuse of *laity* comes from the Roman distinction between the magistrates and the common citizens.

Likewise the word *vocation* has lost its true meaning of *God's universal call*. Instead there is "a widespread acceptance of a double standard of Christian living," Vos lamented. A spiritual life is presumed to mean celibacy, contemplation and voluntary poverty. For the rest of us: Just obey the commandments.

Happenings

Commonweal magazine (475 Riverside Dr. #244, New York, NY 10116; www.cwlmag.org) celebrates 100 years of publication. NCL extends a blessing for 100 more years of thoughtful independent, lay-led Catholic journalism. A celebration dinner will be held October 28, 2024 in Manhattan.

Our NCL and its antecedents, going back to the 1930s, have contributed to *Commonweal* in the form of editors, writers and donations. Presuming NCL's appeal toward our 2025 budget goes well, NCL will assist with *Commonweal's* October benefit dinner.

INITIATIVES

Published for 46 years by National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629

Editor: Bill Droel (wdroel@cs.com). Contributing to this issue: Ambrose Donnelly, NCL treasurer and Bob Raccuglia, former NCL board member.

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

NCL, an independent 501-C-3 organization, was founded in 1978, in response to the mail and publicity generated by publication of the Advent 1977 *Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern* (reprinted in *Social Holiness*, National Center for the Laity, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$2). NCL relies entirely on your donations.

The revelation of Jesus Christ is found through ordinary work, Vos said. In Christ's life "there is no hint of alienation from everyday living and daily toil."

Where is St. John's (www.stjohnsallentown.org) at 11:30 A.M. on Monday, Vos asked of his congregation? "In offices, in kitchens, at sales meetings, in hospital rooms, at gas stations... That's where the presence of Christ's Body will be made known or will be hidden."

In addition to his collaboration with NCL, Vos served on several boards for his denomination. Prior to the ELCA merger, he was chair of the Division for Ministry and served other committees on the laity for the Lutheran Church in America. He was also involved with Good Shepherd Rehabilitation (www.goodshepherdrehab.org), a network of facilities for those with physical disabilities. With wife Beverly, Vos raised three children.