



2023 Catholic Studies Newsletter

May 11, 2023

Sacred Heart University

Message from the Chair



This letter is a significant one for me as I look back over almost a decade of having founded and developed the Department of Catholic Studies, as well as this iteration of *The Human Journey Seminars: Great Books in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*—or the “CIT” as our students fondly refer to these core courses. There is much to be grateful for.

First, and always, I am grateful for the committed and talented faculty who carry the University’s Mission as they facilitate the CIT Seminars and dedicate themselves to our students, to the CIT program, and to the Catholic Studies department. Because of the way we have developed the curriculum and the pedagogy for the CIT Seminars, students often count these courses as among the best and most memorable ones they have had at SHU. Reports from student meetings with the NECHE Team, with the Board of Trustees, and hearing student Ambassadors highlight “CIT” on their tours bear this out. We have created a signature program for Sacred Heart University.

The Human Journey Colloquia have certainly become a signature of the College of Arts and Sciences not only because of the many wonderful guest speakers the series features, but also because of the colloquia presented by our own faculty and students, along with the colloquia that we co-sponsor with other departments and offices.

I am delighted, too, that our *Center for Catholic Studies*, with its Endowed Lectures, has brought our University national recognition because of the Center's stellar speaker series¹.

Our Department has organized and offered two national conferences—*Catholic Higher Education and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition* in 2020, and *Vatican II and Catholic Higher Education: Leading Forward*² in 2022. Both conferences featured nationally recognized keynote speakers and brought scores of participants from universities across the country. We had *The Journal of Catholic Higher Education* dedicate two of its volumes to papers presented from our first conference. And both conferences were supported by Lilly Fellows grants. We have also agreed with the Lilly Fellows Organization to host their national conference here in 2025.

As Chair of the Department, a major and unforgettable moment for me was when five full time Catholic Studies faculty were placed on tenure lines! I could not be more elated and grateful.

One of the most significant initiatives that has emerged from the Department is *Pioneer Journey—A Transformative Education*. This initiative, approved by the Board of Trustees, will bring the ethos and values of the University's Mission across the campus from the classroom to the dorm room, on the athletic field and to the performing arts stage.

I am truly proud to be a founding member of the newly developed Catholic Studies Consortium and to announce that we will host the third Catholic Studies Symposium of this organization here at SHU in September 2023. Our Department is now a member of this Catholic Studies Consortium which includes over 25 Catholic Studies programs from across the country.

I am also delighted to have gained us a seat with the rather select ecclesial gathering *The Way Forward: Pope Francis, Vatican II and Synodality*. I am hoping to have our department host the fourth meeting of this group here at Sacred Heart University.

I am so proud that our Department founded the annual Bergoglio Lecture to honor Pope Francis' vision and work. This year for the University's 60th Anniversary, we hosted three Major Bergoglio lectures.

Most significantly, the number of students who are enrolled in the Minor has escalated to approximately 30 students in the past few years. And no wonder—students are engaged and inspired by the dynamic faculty and the exciting courses we offer. One of our students has just been accepted into the "Explorations in Integral Ecology, Science, Theology and Creation" summer seminar sponsored by the Lumen Christi Institute, the In Lumine Network, and the COLLIS Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture at Cornell University. A group of our CS Minors attended the Commonweal dinner this past year. The growth of our program has led us to develop a major in Catholic Studies which will be proposed next year.

I am so very grateful for my tenure as founding Chair of the Department of Catholic Studies and for what the Department—with an extraordinary faculty—has achieved. Now, I am delighted to 'pass the baton' to **Dan Rober** who I know will lead the Department well and continue to make it flourish and shine.

¹<https://www.sacredheart.edu/academics/colleges--schools/college-of-arts--sciences/departments/catholic-studies/center-for-catholic-studies-spring-speaker-series/>

²<https://www.sacredheart.edu/academics/colleges--schools/college-of-arts--sciences/departments/catholic-studies/vatican-ii-and-catholic-higher-education-leading-forward-conference/>

Michelle Loris

Student Profiles



"Integral Ecology": CS Minor Wins Stipend for Prestigious Summer Seminar

Emma Grady, a Catholic studies minor, has recently been accepted into the “Explorations in Integral Ecology, Science, Theology and Creation” summer seminar sponsored by the Lumen Christi Institute, the COLLIS Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture, and the Lumine Network. This week-long program will take place at Cornell University and will involve students from across the country who will gather to discuss how theological study and be integrated with direct scientific observation of the natural world. Emma has received full funding for lodging and meals, as well as an additional stipend. We are so proud of her!

Emma writes: “Through taking CIT 201, CIT 202, and CIT 'Do All Dogs Go To Heaven' I have had the ability to reconnect with my faith through discussion based courses and passionate professors. This past year I was introduced to the power of learning with one’s heart and mind through seminar discussion. I also learned about ecological conversion and the integration of theology and science. I will bring all that I learned this year to the seminar at Cornell where I am eager to have the opportunity to nurture and continue my faith journey and deepen my knowledge about ecology, theology, and science. I am grateful and honored to have been given this opportunity—which I would not have had without my Catholic Studies courses.”



1 - Catholic Studies Minors at the Commonwealth Dinner in October

In Her Own Words: Emma Drzewiecki's Journey from SHU to St. Louis

Being part of the Catholic Studies minor has allowed me to be vulnerable in the questions I ask the world and humble in the questions the world asks of me. The diverse range of topics discussed within CIT classes revealed to me how we all long for the same things: a sense of belonging, love, and purpose.

Upon graduating from Sacred Heart in the Fall of 2022, I moved to St. Louis, Missouri to join the journey of “L’Arche life”. L’Arche is a network of homes, where people with and without intellectual disabilities live together in community. As a live-in assistant, I live where I work, sharing in day-to-day activities with core members (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and other assistants. As a community centered around mutually transforming relationships and support, L’Arche serves as a living definition of solidarity.

Within the L’Arche community, we all share one, common goal: to make the unique gifts of individuals with and without disabilities known. Much like in a CIT classroom, L’Arche embraces and values me as

my authentic self and calls me to help others do the same. While the work that L'Arche does, and the commitment that it is, was daunting at first, being a Catholic Studies minor gave me the confidence and courage to embark on this journey. It affirmed to me that we are all called to live a life of solidarity, with the aim of fostering mutually transforming relationships.

Since coming to L'Arche, I've realized that solidarity plants itself in the most modest parts of life. It could be as small going to Starbucks for a cup coffee, riding a train, painting a picture, or making pancakes on the weekend. It is simply all the moments we show up for another; a shared experience or conversation, all the moments we work *with* one another. L'Arche has quickly revealed to me that showing up for people in the simplest of ways are often the most powerful.



2 - Emma Drzewiecki with core members of L'Arche-St. Louis

New Faculty Profile



Dr. Callie Tabor is enjoying learning the ins and outs of life in Connecticut in her first year on faculty in the Catholic Studies Department. Prior to coming to SHU, Dr. Tabor's life and learning took place in Oregon; St. Andrews, Scotland; Durham, England; and most recently Atlanta, Georgia. There, Dr. Tabor completed her PhD in Theological Studies at Emory University, where her dissertation focused on learning to see beauty well through the poets Naomi Shihab Nye and Gerard Manley Hopkins (a friend of the Human Journey Seminars!). Dr. Tabor is interested in ways that our ideas of beauty can get distorted by social hierarchies and how the arts, in particular poetry, can encourage an attentiveness to the divine beauty in all creatures. She is looking forward to exploring some of these ideas about beauty with students in her course "Just Beauty" next fall. In her first year teaching at Sacred Heart, Dr. Tabor enjoyed conversations with students in the CIT Human Journey Seminars about God, the good life, the pursuit of just societies and more. She loves that the CIT seminars encourage students to see themselves as conversation partners in the ongoing development of the living Catholic tradition.

Pioneer Journey



Sacred Heart University's **Charles A. Gillespie**, assistant professor in the department of Catholic studies, is taking on a new role as Pioneer Journey director, spearheading SHU's efforts to define and amplify its unique educational experience.

Gillespie's goal is to promote the attributes of a SHU Pioneer throughout the campus and beyond. A new Pioneer Journey committee will work with faculty and staff to create resources about the distinct characteristics and experiences involved in a SHU education. From there, Gillespie will help develop ways for students to put the University's core values into action, ensure that new and existing staff members understand SHU's mission³, assist local community groups that can benefit from SHU partnerships and share information about Sacred Heart's goals and achievements with others in Catholic higher education.

³<https://www.sacredheart.edu/offices--departments-directory/mission-integration--ministry/mission-statement/>

Pioneer Journey is an expression of our distinctive culture at SHU, and part of the University's new focus is to ensure that SHU's unique mission and culture are incorporated into each student's journey as a Pioneer. A description of the Pioneer Journey has been integrated into the freshman orientation program, and its language shared with freshman advisers and embedded in descriptions of some of SHU's core classes.

Laudato Si' Initiative



Chelsea King is the current chair of the Laudato Si Action Platform, made up of students, faculty, and staff here at SHU. This goal of this committee is to find various ways in which we can help make SHU a more sustainable and socially just campus. This year, the committee has been working on a few initiatives including a screening of the documentary "The Letter"⁴ at the SHU Community Theater, an interfaith prayer garden, and continued work with the environmental club to maintain the Pollinator Garden on West campus. Anyone who wishes to join the committee should reach out to Chelsea directly.

⁴<https://www.sacredheart.edu/news-room/news-listing/shu-theatre-screens-the-letter-an-environmental-film/>

Fall 2022 Conference: Vatican II and Catholic Higher Education-- Leading Forward



Sacred Heart University received a Lilly Fellows Program grant to develop and host a three-day, regional conference last October on Vatican II and Catholic Higher Education which was held on the 60th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) and Sacred Heart University's founding.

The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities also supported the conference, titled "Vatican II and Catholic Higher Education: Leading Forward." The conference featured several leading keynote speakers including: **Massimo Faggioli**, a professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University; **Patricia McGuire**, president of Trinity Washington University, Washington, D.C.; **Grant Kaplan**, a professor of theology in the department of theological studies at St. Louis University; and **Susan Bigelow Reynolds**, an assistant professor of Catholic studies at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta.

Visit the conference's webpage⁵ to learn more.

⁵<https://www.sacredheart.edu/academics/colleges--schools/college-of-arts--sciences/departments/catholic-studies/vatican-ii-and-catholic-higher-education-leading-forward-conference/>

Center for Catholic Studies Spring Speaker Series



During the spring semester, the Department of Catholic Studies was honored to host several prominent lecturers for the Center for Catholic Studies Spring Speaker Series⁶, part of the *Human Journey* Colloquia Series.

Scheduled speakers included **Elena Procaro-Foley**, the Brother John G. Driscoll professor of Jewish-Catholic studies, director of core curriculum and professor of religious studies at Iona College in New Rochelle, NY; **Maureen O'Connell**, associate professor of Christian ethics and chair of the religion department at LaSalle University in Philadelphia, PA; **Craig A. Ford, Jr.**, assistant professor of theology and religious studies and co-director of the peace and justice interdisciplinary minor at Saint Norbert College in De Pere, WI; **Maria Teresa Davila**, chair of religious and theologies studies and associate professor of practice at Merrimack College in North Andover, MA; **Hosffman Ospino**, associate professor of theology and education and chair of the department of religious education and pastoral ministry at Boston College in Boston, MA; and **Erin Lothes Biviano**, associate professor and director of graduate theology at Saint Elizabeth University in Morris Township, NJ.

The Catholic intellectual tradition is an ongoing conversation between great Catholic thinkers and the cultures in which they live, exploring important issues. Loris said the upcoming speakers will bring this to SHU during the spring series.

Visit the speaker series webpage⁷ to learn more.

⁶<https://www.sacredheart.edu/academics/colleges--schools/college-of-arts--sciences/departments/catholic-studies/center-for-catholic-studies-spring-speaker-series/>

⁷<https://www.sacredheart.edu/academics/colleges--schools/college-of-arts--sciences/departments/catholic-studies/center-for-catholic-studies-spring-speaker-series/>

The Bergoglio Lectures: Perspectives on Pope Francis and the Synodal Path



Apostolic Nuncio reflects on the papal vision as part of Bergoglio Lecture Series

As part of Sacred Heart University's 60th anniversary and the first speaker in the Bergoglio Lecture Series, **Archbishop Christophe Pierre**, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America, described the Pope's vision, public image and way of speaking in his lecture, "Pope Francis: Origins and Destination"⁸.

Pierre began his presentation with an introduction to the Catholic intellectual tradition as shaped by Pope Francis. "The church in the present age, his words and actions have been considered through the lenses of various ideological mindsets resulting at times in contrasting understandings," he said.

Continuing, Pierre discussed the pope's public image. "There is no doubt that most people consider him as a reformer—a pope who wants to bring the church into conversation with the challenges of the times, which, for some, seems to lack continuity with previous pontificates."

Pope Francis' way of speaking is direct and incisive, inviting people to engage and aimed at stimulating a response. "This is why a question keeps ringing through the walls of the church and emerging from the pages of books and newspapers articles. Who is Pope Francis," he said.

⁸<https://www.sacredheart.edu/news-room/news-listing/archbishop-christophe-pierre-lectures-on-pope-francis-during-campus-visit/>

“These reflections are meant to contribute to the search for an answer, and this is why I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you about the Pope,” said Pierre. “We should never stop trying to answer this question.”

Cardinal McElroy Lectures about Church Inclusiveness

Cardinal Robert W. McElroy presented Sacred Heart University’s second Bergoglio lecture of the semester, “Widening Our Tent: The Synodal Imperative for Radical Inclusion⁹.” It focused on the need to welcome people who feel excluded from the Catholic church.

McElroy, who also is bishop of the Diocese of San Diego, CA, began his presentation¹⁰ by discussing the need for wider acceptance of all people from all backgrounds, with emphasis on the LGBTQ+ community. “There should be no group that doesn’t have the right to participate in the various rites of the Church,” he said. He emphasized that the Church must continue to create an environment of love and light. “We are never done growing. The call to further develop never comes; it is up to us to change for the better,” he said.

No matter how many times one fails, there is always room for forgiveness in God’s heart, McElroy reminded his audience. “We are all works in progress. God stands beside us the whole way,” he said.

Cardinal Tobin Says the Holy Spirit Guides Synod

Cardinal Joseph Tobin presented SHU’s third and final Bergoglio lecture of the semester, “Pope Francis: Journey of Synodality¹¹.” Tobin, a member of the synod council tasked with exploring issues facing the Church, talked primarily about the need to overcome divisions and move forward in unity.

With humor and piety, Tobin—who also is the archbishop of Newark, NJ—began his presentation with an anecdote about time he spent with Pope Francis. He shared his observation that the pope exhibits a deep understanding of the world and its people.

He moved to discussion about the synod, recalling that when he was called to serve on the council, he believed the members would choose immigration and refugees as their focus. “I thought this would be a great topic for the Holy Father,” he said. “[Immigrants are] fleeing for their lives and their families, driven by violence, driven by poverty, driven by environmental questions that were the product of the thoughtless consumerism of wealthier nations.”

Pope Francis, however, was adamant that the topic be synodality—journeying together as people of God. So, the council began its mission of exploring ways to unite the Church, which has been divided on a number of issues, including the LGBTQ community and the positions women may hold in the Church. Tobin told his audience that the Holy Spirit lies at the center of the discussions, and that understanding how the Holy Spirit speaks to local Churches is particularly important.

⁹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkYcKmdw9ck&t=1062s>

¹⁰<https://www.sacredheart.edu/media/shu-media/catholic-studies/Cardinal-McElroy-Talk-02-22-23.pdf>

¹¹<https://youtu.be/AhLr8NJzShE?t=186>

When he discussed the Church's need to look at the world as it exists today, Tobin quoted from Pope Francis' programmatic statement published in 2013: "[The pope] said, 'I dream of a missionary option, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation,'"

Synodality "is nothing less than an invitation to discover anew the gift that has been given to us," Tobin continued. "In order that we missionary disciples fulfill the apostolic mission that has been entrusted to us, we need the action of the Holy Spirit. We need to remain open to Her inspirations and responsive to Her charismas, her gifts."

He said the Church must hear and trust the Holy Spirit to start creating unity. "The synodal walk is done by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the head of the synodal path," he said, emphasizing that in shaping the future, Church members must journey together as "people of God." Drawing on Biblical references, he said diversity should not keep people apart.







In memory of our sister Joan Kelly



As many of you know we lost our beloved colleague and friend Joan Kelly on May 5th. The suddenness of her death left many of us quite off balance, for sure. She brought to us the gifts of her wisdom, grace and love. She loved teaching in the CIT and she absolutely loved her students and they loved her in return, just as much.

She was a true academic and scholar, having received her degrees from Catholic University of America and the University of Notre Dame.

We know how much she loved her colleagues because so many of us were touched by that love.

The source of Joan's wisdom and love was her deep and enduring devotion to her Catholic faith. Joan received the Papal Cross—the Holy See's highest honor for the laity—from Saint Pope John Paul II.

As we shared in the Eucharistic celebration with Joan, we shared in Joan's love for her faith. And we asked Joan to pray for us. And we told her how much we loved her, and how sore our hearts are at missing her.



3 - Sacred Heart's Eucharistic Celebration of Joan's Life and Faith