What an encouraging, promising, amazing first year this has been for the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life of Georgetown University. One year ago, the Initiative began carrying out its unique mission:

- to promote deeper knowledge and broader dialogue on Catholic Social Thought,
- to prepare students and other young people for affirmative and principled engagement in public life, and
- to promote civil dialogue and collaboration across religious, ideological and political lines in pursuit of the common good.

The Initiative has found the right academic and organizational home at Georgetown University, working with students, faculty and others to advance the University’s distinctive mission and identity.

The remarkable participation in our Dialogues, excitement over our outreach to young Catholic leaders, and diverse participation in our convenings on US poverty have exceeded our hopes. There is not only openness, but hunger for increased knowledge, reflection, and dialogue on the links between faith, Catholic Social Thought, and public life. Pope Francis, with his humble ways and powerful words, is creating enormous opportunities and momentum for this mission. The Initiative is a timely and concrete way to advance the vision of Pope Francis, to educate future leaders, and to pursue the common good.

President John J. DeGioia and Georgetown University have offered the Initiative a warm welcome and strong support. Tom Banchoff, Georgetown’s vice president for global engagement, has been an invaluable leader, guide, and advocate for the Initiative. Cardinal Wuerl and Cardinal McCarrick have supported our efforts from the beginning. More than 30 individuals and foundations have helped to launch the Initiative with their generous contributions. We are seeking additional resources to sustain the Initiative’s essential work into the future. Our colleagues at Georgetown and the Berkley Center for Peace, Religion, and World Affairs have helped us find our way forward. Caitlin Devine’s great commitment, excellent work, and many skills have been at the center of the Initiative’s progress.

Since our inaugural Dialogue on “The Francis Factor,” which packed Gaston Hall, a total audience of more than 2,500 people—students and faculty, Catholic and interfaith leaders, scholars and advocates, journalists and policymakers—have been a part of this amazing first year. The Initiative has moved from a promising idea to a vital national center of dialogue, analysis and action on human dignity, the common good and overcoming polarization across religious and political divisions. The Initiative—at Georgetown, in Washington and in the Catholic and interfaith and academic community—is a unique expression of the wisdom of Pope Francis:

“An authentic faith, which is never comfortable or completely personal, always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it.”

-Evangelii Gaudium
The Initiative brought together more than 2,500 students, scholars, policymakers, journalists, Catholic and interfaith leaders and the public for five timely, lively and substantive conversations about the implications of Catholic Social Thought on key policy questions. These dialogues, in Washington and online, have examined the policy impact of Pope Francis and moral dimensions of poverty, politics, partisanship, and humanitarian intervention.

**The Francis Factor**

A standing-room only crowd of more than 700 attended “The Francis Factor” on October 1, 2013. Cardinal Wuerl and President DeGioia opened the program with strong support and a warm welcome for the Initiative. The PBS duo of Mark Shields and David Brooks joined Kim Daniels from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and leader of an association of Catholic foundations Alexia Kelly in a lively discussion, which John Carr moderated, on the stunning impact of Pope Francis’ election and leadership.

**The Pope and the Poor**

“The Pope and the Poor” drew more than 500, just a few days after Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* was released. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick offered a powerful summary of Pope Francis’ call to make those who are poor a priority in our ecclesial, public and personal lives. John Carr moderated a timely discussion on Pope Francis’ warnings about “an economy of exclusion and injustice” with Georgetown professor and *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne, fellow *Post* columnist Michael Gerson, Kathryn Jean Lopez of the *National Review Online*, and Bishop Stephen Blaire of the Diocese of Stockton.
Pope Francis’ message and impact on public life on February 3 brought together a distinguished panel of John Allen of the Boston Globe, Ross Douthat of the New York Times, and Kerry Robinson of the National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management, with John Carr as moderator. More than 600 students, faculty, Catholic leaders and Washington insiders attended this provocative session on Francis’ already powerful impact on public life in the United States.


On April 28, a dialogue on the moral demands and limitations of partisanship began with a superb theological reflection by Bishop Robert McElroy, auxiliary bishop of San Francisco. John Carr moderated a candid panel of former Clinton press secretary Michael McCurry, former GOP chair Michael Steele, Erie County executive and former Democratic representative Kathy Dahlkemper, and Republican political consultant Mark McKinnon. The evening concluded with remarkably candid reflections by Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC) on the costs and obligations of following conscience instead of the party line.
REACHING OUT TO A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS

The Initiative gathers young Catholics involved in public policy in our nation’s capital to explore connections between faith, Catholic social teaching, and their professional lives. These sessions include dialogue about faith and work and the principles of Catholic Social Thought, as well as opportunities for prayer, reflection, and networking.

The first Salt and Light Gathering took place in June at the Georgetown School of Continuing Studies. Over 120 lay Catholic professionals under 40 who work on Capitol Hill, in the Administration or in other public policy organizations filled the auditorium of the downtown campus. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and John Carr opened the evening with reflections on Pope Francis’ message for young leaders.

Jon Favreau, former speechwriter for President Barack Obama, and Michael Gerson, former speechwriter for President George W. Bush, reflected on their experiences as persons of faith and public policy professionals. From differing political and ideological perspectives, they talked candidly about how faith and politics align and conflict in the real world of Washington. The young leaders in attendance represented different parties, affiliations and backgrounds. They came early and stayed late, listening and learning, eating, drinking and networking.

The Initiative is also working with a group of young Hispanic leaders in Washington to help them explore the particular challenges and assets of Catholic social teaching in their service and leadership.

“This is a brilliant idea…DC is filled with young Catholics who are looking to live full spiritual lives and effect substantive change. I’m looking forward to going to more events.”

–Capitol Hill staffer
Other Initiative Activities

Breaking the Silence and Stalemate on Poverty

The Initiative is bringing together Catholic, evangelical and other leaders to challenge the public silence and policy stalemate on US poverty. This groundbreaking convening crosses religious, ideological and political lines to address both economic and family dimensions of poverty. This ongoing effort will create new partnerships, directions, and urgency to address the moral imperative of overcoming poverty in the United States.

This new Strategy and Leadership Summit in 2015 will bring together diverse leaders from Catholic, evangelical and other communities to overcome the inaction and ideological polarization on US poverty. This unique summit will examine ways to overcome the divisions between those who focus mostly on family structures and those who focus primarily on economic structures as causes and remedies of poverty.

Our partner for this initiative is the National Association of Evangelicals, and among key participants are leaders of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bread for the World, Sojourners, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Harvard Professor Robert Putnam (author of *Bowling Alone* and *American Grace*). The Initiative, along with the National Association of Evangelicals, brought together 40 Catholic and evangelical leaders with differing perspectives and affiliations as well as key researchers and opinion leaders for a briefing by Professor Putnam and to help guide the new Strategy and prepare for the Summit.

"This Initiative [...] is playing a significant role in advancing Pope Francis’ vision of a Church ‘for the poor’ and our Holy Father’s call for leaders in public life to defend the weak and advance the common good. The Initiative [...] provides an important presence and voice here in Washington."

–Cardinal Donald Wuerl

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching

The Initiative plans to work with the Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace and other Catholic academic centers to examine how to work together to promote knowledge, research and understanding on Catholic Social Thought. Another priority will be offering suggestions to strengthen the impact of Catholic Social Thought in seminary curriculum, formation, and pastoral preparation.

Cardinal Peter Turkson of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace strongly supports the Initiative and has encouraged it to lead and work with other academic centers on Catholic social teaching to find effective ways to collaborate in response to new interest and openness created by the example of Pope Francis in placing Catholic Social Thought at the center of his leadership and priorities.

In this first year the Initiative has drawn broad and positive coverage from the *Washington Post*, CNN, PBS, NPR, EWTN, Voice of America and a full range of Catholic media and blogs. The Initiative has a useful presence on the web (catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu) and Facebook (facebook.com/catholicsocialthought). All of the Dialogues are available to view on the website.

The Initiative’s leadership has been invited to speak to many groups, including campus ministry leaders and classes at Georgetown, a number of Catholic and interfaith events, the Order of Malta, the Catholic Information Center, Theology on Tap, Trinity University, and other colleges and universities.
ADMINISTRATION

The Initiative is located in historic Maguire Hall, adjacent to the Presidents Room and part of the Healy Hall complex at the center of the Georgetown campus. The Initiative is part of the President’s Office and receives indispensable administrative and other support from the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. The Initiative is and will remain a small, entrepreneurial, collaborative center of strategic activities, focused on its key goals and mission within Georgetown and in the nation’s capital.

FUNDRAISING

A distinguished group led by Cardinal McCarrick, Msgr. John Enzler and Shep Abell have helped guide the Initiative and raise essential financial resources to fund the Initiative’s important work. The Founders Circle of donors has grown to more than 30 individuals, foundations and organizations. The Initiative is making steady progress in raising funds, but more donors and resources are needed to continue the work of the Initiative in the future. The Initiative is grateful to those who have made this impressive beginning possible and welcomes any opportunity to meet with others interested in this work. If you have questions, ideas or wish to support the work of the Initiative, please contact John Carr at john.carr@georgetown.edu or 202-687-1599.

FOUNDERS CIRCLE OF SUPPORTERS

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In its first year, the Initiative has moved from a promising idea to a vital center of dialogue and activity to share and advance Catholic Social Thought. The Initiative is seizing the momentum from Pope Francis’ challenging leadership. This is a time for serious scholarly attention to Catholic Social Thought and for research, analysis and dialogue on its impact. The Initiative is sharing more broadly and deeply the wisdom of Catholic social teaching and reaching out to new generations of Catholic leaders to become “salt, light and leaven” in public life.

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