The Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life is a unique effort in the nation’s capital to promote dialogue on Catholic social thought and national and global issues, build bridges across political, religious, and ideological lines, and encourage a new generation of Catholic lay leaders to see their faith as an asset in pursuing the common good.

The Initiative is located in the Office of the President and partners with other key Georgetown organizations to advance the Catholic and Jesuit mission of Georgetown. Through teaching, a Student Fellows program, and other educational efforts, the Initiative engages Georgetown faculty and students, as well as the Washington community, on moral questions at the intersection of faith and public life.

In six years the Initiative has become a respected center of dialogue in a divided capital, organizing more than 70 dialogues, Convenings, and other gatherings, drawing nearly 25,000 students, Washington leaders, and others to Georgetown.
Public Dialogues
Our Public Dialogues offer civil, principled, and substantive discussions on the implications of Catholic social thought for faith, politics, and key domestic and international policy issues.

Dahlgren Dialogues
These substantive conversations with respected and diverse leaders in Georgetown’s Dahlgren Chapel focus on moral questions at the intersection of faith and public life in a context of prayerful reflection.

Salt and Light Gatherings
Salt and Light Gatherings bring together young Catholic leaders in Washington to explore links between faith, Catholic social thought, and their lives and work.

Latino Leaders Gatherings
These gatherings for young Latino Catholics explore key challenges and personal stories about faith and public life with distinguished Latinos and other leaders.

National Leadership Convenings
The Initiative’s multi-day Convenings bring together diverse leaders from differing political, ideological, and ecclesial perspectives to work together to address important issues facing our Church and nation.
The Initiative has demonstrated that there is a hunger for principled civil dialogue in a time of polarization; a search for a moral vocabulary to address contentious issues; and an openness to Catholic social thought and the leadership of Pope Francis as ways to bring people together in divisive times. Almost 25,000 people have attended more than 70 Initiative dialogues, gatherings for young leaders, and other convenings.

Initiative dialogues have addressed a broad range of moral, political, policy, and faith-related issues, including:

- Faith and the Faithful in U.S. Politics
- Stand for Life, All Life, Every Life: Resisting the Throwaway Culture
- The “Francis Factor” in Politics, Economics, the U.S., and the Church
- The Dignity of Work: Putting Workers at the Center of a Divided Economy
- Beyond the Wall: Human Impacts, Moral Principles, and Policy Directions on Immigration
- Confronting a Moral Catastrophe: Lay Leadership, Catholic Social Teaching, and the Sexual Abuse Crisis
- Confronting Racism in Our Hearts and in Our Nation
- Women Taking the Lead: Acting on Pope Francis’ Message

PROMOTING DIALOGUE
FAITH AND THE FAITHFUL IN U.S. POLITICS

The place of faith and the roles of the faithful in U.S. politics are often misunderstood and neglected, generate confusion and conflict, and are changing and challenging both religious communities and political leaders and parties. This series of dialogues, partially co-sponsored by the Georgetown Institute of Politics and Public Service, explores the intersection of faith, politics, and public life.

THE “FRANCIS FACTOR”

Since his election in 2013, Pope Francis has inspired the world and challenged the Church with his humble ways and powerful words. These dialogues focus on Pope Francis’ mission and message, his impacts and challenges, and responses to his leadership.

LAY LEADERSHIP AND THE CLERGY SEX ABUSE CRISIS

The horrific moral, human, and spiritual costs of the clergy sexual abuse crisis are undermining faith and destroying trust in the Catholic Church. This series of dialogues has brought together survivors, theologians, journalists, parishioners, and leaders in efforts to address sexual abuse and discuss what must now be done to protect the vulnerable, hold leaders accountable, and begin to reform, renew, and heal the Church.

MORAL DIMENSIONS OF KEY ISSUES

Issues like ending poverty, welcoming immigrants and refugees, promoting human life and dignity, supporting the rights of workers, and caring for creation have economic, political, and spiritual dimensions. These dialogues explore the human and moral costs of these key issues and how people with differing political, ideological, and religious perspectives can work together to use Catholic social teaching to advance the common good.
Over the years, the Initiative has hosted dozens of speakers representing diverse political, religious, academic, and media organizations, including:

President Barack Obama  
Cory Booker (D-NJ), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Tim Scott (R-SC)  
*U.S. Senate*

John Delaney (D-MD), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), Walter Jones (R-NC), Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), John Lewis (D-GA), Francis Rooney (R-FL), and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)  
*U.S. House of Representatives*

Cardinals Blase Cupich, Oscar Rodriguez, Joseph Tobin, and Peter Turkson  

Archbishops José Gomez, Wilton Gregory, and Peter Tomasi and Bishops Mario Dorsonville, Robert McElroy, and Ricardo Ramírez  

Arthur Brooks, Robert Doar, and Michael Strain  
*American Enterprise Institute*

Katie Corrigan and Richard Trumka  
*AFL-CIO*

Peter Wehner  
*Ethics and Public Policy Center*

Cokie Roberts  
*ABC*

Fr. Matt Malone, S.J., and Fr. James Martin, S.J.  
*America Media*

Emma Green  
*The Atlantic*

Greg Erlandson  
*Catholic News Service*

Fr. Antonio Spadaro, S.J.  
*La Civiltà Cattolica*

Matthew Sitman  
*Commonweal*

Lauren Ashburn and Gloria Purvis  
*EWTN*

Rusty Reno  
*First Things*

John Carr is the founder and director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life and an adjunct professor of theology at Georgetown University. He served for over 20 years as director of the Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). He is chair of the board for Bread for the World; a member of the board of the Law School of the University of St. Thomas; and a founder of the Circle of Protection. John has also served as a Washington columnist for *America* and a Residential Fellow on religion and politics at the Institute of Politics of Harvard University.
Kim Daniels is the associate director of the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life and an adjunct professor of theology at Georgetown University. She was appointed by Pope Francis as a Member of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication in 2016, and in that role was an advisor to the organizing committee for the February 2019 Vatican Meeting on the Protection of Minors. She is also a consultor to the USCCB’s Committee for Religious Liberty, and has advised the USCCB and other Catholic institutions on a broad range of issues where Church teachings intersect with public life, including immigration, human life and dignity, religious liberty, and care for creation.
Since its founding in 2013, the Initiative has held four historic National Leadership Convenings bringing together dozens of diverse leaders from across the United States with differing political, ideological, and ecclesial perspectives. The panels, small group discussions, and individual conversations held at the Convenings exemplify the Initiative’s mission to promote dialogue, build bridges, and encourage a new generation of leaders to build the common good in the Church and in society.

CATHOLIC-EVANGELICAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT ON OVERCOMING POVERTY

In 2015, this unprecedented three-day summit brought together President Barack Obama, Harvard Professor Robert Putnam, AEI President Arthur Brooks, and more than 150 Catholic, evangelical, and policy leaders to discuss how best to end the silence and break the stalemate on overcoming U.S. poverty. The summit concluded with strategic discussions on work and wages, tax policy, criminal justice, immigration, predatory lending, and strengthening alliances for common action.

VATICAN AND U.S. ACADEMIC CENTERS ON CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

In 2017, this Convening brought together leaders of U.S. academic centers focused on Catholic social teaching to share their work, structures, best
practices, and future goals. Over three days, academic centers dialogued with Cardinal Peter Turkson and other leaders of the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development and explored possible areas of collaboration in order to advance Pope Francis’ mission and message in this area.

THOUGH MANY, ONE: OVERCOMING POLARIZATION THROUGH CATHOLIC SOCIAL THOUGHT

In 2018, Catholic leaders came from across generations and racial/ethnic backgrounds, with differing ideological and political perspectives and varying ecclesial and theological outlooks, to explore whether and how Catholic social teaching can offer ways to work together to defend human life and dignity and contribute to a more just nation and more peaceful world in these challenging and difficult days.

LAY LEADERSHIP FOR A WOUNDED CHURCH AND DIVIDED NATION

In 2019, the Initiative brought together 55 leaders of major Catholic institutions, ministries, universities, and lay efforts for two intense days of listening, learning, strategizing, and praying together on the crisis of clergy sexual abuse and leadership. These leaders shared what they have learned and explored how they could work together to renew and reform our wounded Church and revitalize efforts to work together for the common good in our divided nation.
ENGAGING YOUNG LEADERS

SALT AND LIGHT GATHERINGS

The Initiative regularly brings together young Catholics in Washington to explore links between faith, Catholic social thought, and their lives and work, especially on public policy. These unique Salt and Light Gatherings are for Catholics under 40 years old who work on Capitol Hill or in the administration, other branches of government, or public policy organizations. They are held in the Capitol or at Georgetown’s School of Continuing Studies, with presentations and discussion on a critical topic and receptions for networking.

LATINO LEADER GATHERINGS

The Initiative brings together young Latino Catholics to discuss key issues and personal stories about faith and public life from distinguished Latinos and other leaders. These events also offer valuable opportunities for discussion, reflection, networking, and community-building. Past topics include the impact of a pope from Latin America, immigration issues, and lay leadership in the Latino community.

Salt and Light and Latino Leader Gatherings have addressed a diverse range of policy, moral, and religious issues, including:

• How Not to Lose Your Faith in Washington
• Emerging Leaders on Polarization in a Broken Church and Nation
• Politics as a Vocation: Reflections from Members of Congress
• Courageous Faith: Archbishop Óscar Romero, Saint and Leader
• Crisis of Faith? Scandal, Pope Francis, the Synod, and Young People
• Immigration Experiences: Human, Political, and Legal Dimensions
• Covering Religion and Politics: Lessons from Pope Francis’ Visit and for the 2016 Campaign
• A Jesuit Pope Named Francis
FACULTY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The Initiative is a vital contributor to the academic and community life of Georgetown University. John Carr and Kim Daniels both teach a well-received Seminar on Pope Francis, Catholic Social Thought, and Public Life in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies.

Students are involved as CST Fellows and both faculty and students serve as panelists and participants in Initiative programs. The Initiative has played significant roles in the university’s socially responsible investment efforts and has contributed to Georgetown’s efforts to promote human life and dignity, advance solidarity with immigrants and refugees, and respond to the legacy of slavery.

“Since its founding in 2013, the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life has brought together thousands of individuals in dialogue and reflection. It has enabled our community to engage the values that animate the mission of our university and to embrace the message of Pope Francis.”

– John J. DeGioia, President, Georgetown University
IN THE NEWS

Journalists and policymakers look to John Carr and Kim Daniels, the Initiative’s director and associate director, as knowledgeable sources on the intersection between faith and politics and on Catholic social thought and key global and domestic policy issues.


Visit catholicsocialthought.georgetown.edu to learn more and to:

• Sign up to receive invitations to Initiative gatherings
• Watch videos of our programs
• Connect on social media
• Support the work of the Initiative

“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 that we found it.”

– Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, #183