CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY



HONORING HUMAN DIGNITY

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CENTER FOR CATHOLIC STUDIES
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

From the Director



Patrick Manning, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Catholic Studies

Dear friends,

I write to you as we transition not only from one year to the next but, it would seem, from one epoch to another. Pope Leo describes the moment in his new encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, in this way: "Humanity, created by God in all its grandeur, is today facing a pivotal choice: either to construct a new Tower of Babel or to build the city in which God and humanity dwell together." He is referring, of course, to humanity's choice regarding how to make use of the powerful tool of artificial intelligence, which has the potential for much good but also much harm.

In his encyclical, the Pope draws attention to the decisive role educational institutions have to play in this moment. Like other schools, Catholic universities have a responsibility to educate people about this new technology. However, Catholic universities have the added responsibility and the means to form people in the wisdom of the Catholic tradition so that we may discern wisely how to put this powerful technology in service of human flourishing and the common good. Seton Hall has very much embraced this responsibility. Building on last year's reflections on Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'*, the university community is now turning its collective attention to the theme of human dignity, which resides at the heart of *Magnifica Humanitas*. There Pope Leo writes, "Whenever humanity is in danger of marring its true identity, we Christians lift our eyes to the Incarnate God, knowing that it is 'only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear.'" If Christ reveals what it means to be human, then those who have become most like him show us that humanity most fully. For this reason, we have been giving special attention to the witness of the saints this past year. Our annual faculty seminar in May explored how Saint Augustine's work can expose modern idolatries such as consumerism and nationalism, and in October Seton Hall welcomed the relics of Saint Bernadette of Lourdes as they made a stop on their pilgrimage across the United States.

Against this backdrop, the work of the Center for Catholic Studies has never been more important. Deeply rooted in the Catholic intellectual tradition, we continue to explore new ways to share the resources of that tradition to meet the historical moment. This fall we worked with the Office of the Provost to host a reading group on the encyclical that brought together participants from every school of the university and several other key campus units, establishing the principles of the encyclical as a common framework for engaging with AI. We continue to partner with Campus Ministry on initiatives like Agape Latte, which presents students with adult models of flourishing in faith. Our efforts extend beyond campus as well through public events such as our Catholic ethics and values seminars, co-sponsored with the International Academy of Catholic Leaders. The inaugural seminar took place in January, and a second, which convened experts in education, finance and health care around a discussion of the new encyclical, followed in October.

Many of these initiatives were made possible through generous gifts the Center received this past year. Through such gifts and our continued efforts, we work together to build the "civilization of love" of which Pope Leo speaks. We are grateful for your partnership in this work.

Best wishes for a blessed Christmas and New Year,



Patrick Manning, Ph.D.

Digital Outreach

The Center and its institutes share lectures, publications and podcasts with audiences beyond campus. The Chesterton Institute reaches 56 countries through its work, podcast and social media.

Center for Catholic Studies social media activity
Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn · January 1–November 1, 2026

140,572

Views and impressions

3,286

Interactions with our posts



Saint Augustine, Philippe de Champaigne, c. 1645.

G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture



Gloria Garafulich-Grabois, DHS
Director, G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture

When people begin to ignore human dignity, it will not be long before they begin to ignore human rights. —G.K. Chesterton

Since its founding in 1974, the **G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture** has been actively engaged in several important projects whose purpose is to promote Chestertonian thinking in all its range and depth. Through our work, we continue to examine Chesterton's 'Distributist' philosophy. Chesterton strongly argued in favor of the widespread ownership of productive property. He thought it to be the best guarantee of a social order that was both free and fair. This distributist philosophy has much to offer us today. In particular, it grounds our economic thinking in a rich Christian anthropology that sees the human person not as a discrete set of appetites–a mere producer or consumer–but as a being made in the image and likeness of God.

Building on his legacy, and through our work, the Institute continues to publish numerous articles and book reviews of publications that examine Distributism, as well as holding conferences on his economic thought. Chesterton believed that the recognition of human dignity is associated with the ability to make free choices in his life and in society. Chesterton grounded human dignity in the image of God. His argument was that inherent worth belonged to ordinary people, not to political or intellectual elites.



The slogan "Three acres and a cow" was first coined by Eli Hamshire, a philosopher from Surrey, England, who actually farmed 3 acres, as his father did before him. Chesterton used this slogan as a cornerstone of his socioeconomic philosophy, Distributism. His drawing *Three acres and a cow* refers to the ideal ownership—the minimum amount of land and the livestock a rural family needed. It links directly to human dignity, personal freedom, self-sufficiency, economic independence and family stability.

For 52 years, through its work—conferences, lecture series, research, writing, podcast, social media and its highly praised journal ***The Chesterton Review***—the Institute continues to play a key role in the worldwide Chesterton revival and is present in the larger world beyond our home—our outreach is global. The work centers on important topics like global Christian traditions, Catholic Social Teaching and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. Therefore, in our work, and guided by Chesterton's philosophy, human dignity, the dignity of work, and personal freedom are central to our purpose, as we,

"Imagine a world with leaders rooted in Chestertonian ideals."

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Institute and to support our work

Bernard J. Lonergan Institute



Jonathan Heaps, Ph.D.
Director, Bernard J. Lonergan Institute

Pope Leo XIV, quoting St. Pope John Paul II, writes in the new encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, that the "heightened sense of the dignity of the human person and of his or her uniqueness…certainly represents one of the positive achievements of modern culture." Fr. Lonergan, so dedicated to engaging and Christianizing modern culture, embraced this heightened sense of human dignity. He called the human person both an "originating value" and a "terminal value." By this he meant that human beings have their dignity both as a special source of good things in the world and as—short of God Himself—their foremost destination in this world. This past year, as Director of the Bernard J. Lonergan Institute, I have had the privilege of helping to originate some especially worthwhile endeavors that help to underline the dignity of human persons, both as they are in communion with one another and with their God.

Second Annual Fall Lonergan Symposium: our theme for this year's Symposium was "Mysticism and Method." In cooperation with Villanova University's Patristics, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies Conference (PMR), the Lonergan Institute hosted Dr. Mary Frohlich, RSCJ, Dr. Amy Maxey, and Dr. Kevin Hughes for a discussion of Lonergan's influence on the study of Christian Mysticism, with a special focus on the work of Dr. Bernard McGinn. Our panelists presented both at Seton Hall on Oct 8 and then again at PMR on Oct 9. The Seton Hall event was livestreamed to more than 200 people, the recording of which is now available on YouTube (see recording address below).

***The Lonergan Review* Vol. XV, "Cooperating Community":** our latest issue of the Institute's journal contains articles on topics ranging from the influence of a German Jesuit economist on the younger Lonergan to a comparison of Lonergan's thought with African epistemology to how Lonergan's writings can contribute to a spirituality of community in modern American life. Volume XV also includes, with the generous permission of Fordham University Press, a reprinting of Robert Doran's (1939–2021) autobiographical essay about the influence of Daniel Berrigan (1921–2016) on his own theological project. You can subscribe to *The Lonergan Review* through the Institute website (see below).

The Lonergan Institute Podcast: after a brief hiatus, more episodes will be appearing soon. The podcast includes discussions with interesting people whose lives, faith and careers have been shaped by their encounters with Lonergan's work. You can find past episodes at the Lonergan Institute website or in your favorite pod-catcher.



"Mysticism and Method"
Oct. 8, 2026
Photo: Joy Yagid

Watch, Read, Listen

Journal/podcast: shu.edu/lonergan
Symposium: youtu.be/3PgnZpeetxk

Program Highlights



DEC. 2025 & FEB. 2026

Clergy AI Workshop

Archdiocese of Newark clergy explored AI with Taylor Black and Ruth Tsuria, and pastoral leadership with Matthew Manion.



MARCH 26, 2026

Young Alumni Panel

At the Young Alumni Panel, recent graduates joined current students to discuss faith, vocation and life after college.



APRIL 21, 2026

Laudato Si' Challenge

Seven student teams presented environmental projects inspired by *Laudato Si'*. Sisters of Water won first place.



MAY 26–28, 2026

Faculty Summer Seminar

With William Cavanaugh, faculty examined consumerism and nationalism in light of Saint Augustine's writings.



JUNE 11–12, 2026

Annual Faculty Retreat

At San Alfonso Retreat House, faculty reflected on human dignity through prayer and conversation.



JAN. 30–31 & OCT. 24, 2026

Ethics and Values in the Era of AI

The January seminar examined AI through Catholic ethics. The October seminar focused on human dignity in education, finance and healthcare.

STEWARDSHIP

Support for the Center



"It's about legacy, not wealth. Every gift matters, no matter the size."

Mary J. Meehan, Ph.D.
'72/M.A. '74/Ph.D. '01

Mary Meehan's connection to Seton Hall spans her years as a student and her service as interim president. She believes Catholic education prepares people for life, and her support for the Center reflects a concern for the generations who will follow. Her gift helps sustain the Center's work of bringing the Catholic Intellectual Tradition into the lives of students, faculty and the wider community.

Ways to support the Center

To learn about giving options, contact:
Sharon T. Morrissey
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Office: (973) 378-9878 | Mobile: (862) 370-9433

www.shu.edu/supportCCS

Scan the QR code or use the link above.

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Center for Catholic Studies

The Center for Catholic Studies supports Seton Hall's Catholic mission as an Archdiocesan University. We live, share and deepen Catholic identity through our initiatives that help students, faculty and the local Church encounter all that is True, Good and Beautiful.

Patrick Manning, Ph.D.

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