



“Education and Culture”

Saturday, November 12, 10:45–12:00 p.m. | Room 205 | Chair: Brett Robinson (University of Notre Dame)

”The Freshman as Creature: An Approach to Student Life”

Gregory Roper (University of Dallas)

Many Student Life programs, whether they realize it or not, are founded on the precepts of a postmodern expressive individualism; no wonder, then, that those in Student Affairs deal with students who mistake liberty for license and conversely, suffer from increasing levels of anxiety and depression. What is needed is a return to a healthy anthropology of the created human as person and not individual, as enmeshed in relation, bound to responsibility and gratitude, an ensouled body living in community with others.

Bio: Gregory Roper, PhD is Associate Professor of English and, since October 2021, Dean of Students at the University of Dallas. He has published on Chaucer, the Gawain-poet, and medieval penitential manuals. His book *The Writer’s Workshop* in 2007 opened up a new emphasis on the art of imitation in the teaching of writing, especially in classical education circles, and his forthcoming book, *Mastering the Four Arguments*, uses the oft-neglected ancient concept of Stasis Theory to help students shape clearer and more compelling persuasive writing. He is currently completing a book tentatively titled *Brain Worms and Core Truths: Twenty Silly Shibboleths of a Progressive Education and Ten Sanities of a Liberal One* and another entitled *Core to Life: How the Great Books Can Inform Your Life in the Dorm and Well Beyond It*.

“The Metaphysics of Artistic Creation and Interpretation: Jacques Maritain and the Crisis of the Humanities”

James Mcfetridge Wilson (University of Cambridge)



It has almost become cliché to claim that the humanities are in a state of crisis. For both intellectual and practical reasons, enrollment in the humanistic disciplines is in steady decline, and the value of the scholarship is increasingly called into question. The methodological upheaval currently making its way through literary studies departments in particular has created the space for a widespread reevaluation of the discipline's fundamental principles and presuppositions: What is the purpose and value of literary studies? What does it mean to interpret a piece of fiction? and what qualifies as scholarship?

I argue that Jacques Maritain's largely overlooked philosophical insights in *Art and Scholasticism* (1935) and *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (1954) can aid contemporary literary studies in addressing these fundamental questions. Just as Maritain offers a metaphysically coherent vision of artistic creation through a resourcement of Thomas Aquinas conceptual categories, this same metaphysical vision can be resourced in articulating a contemporary vision of literary interpretation. Ultimately, I draw on the insights of Maritain, Henri De Lubac, Denys Turner, Rowan Williams, and Catherine Pickstock, among others, in arguing for the enduring relevance of the patristic interpretive practices—broadly referred to as “Spiritual Exegesis”—for offering the contemporary academy an alternative, postcritical, interpretive approach to literary studies.

Bio: James McFetridge Wilson is a writer, musician, and scholar from Charlottesville Virginia. He is a graduate of Deep Springs College, The University of Virginia, Duke Divinity School, and is currently pursuing his PhD in Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Cambridge UK. James is currently working on the relationship between metaphysics and poetics in literary modernism with a focus on the writings of American modernist William Faulkner.

“Reading God’s First Book”

Kyle Washut (Wyoming Catholic College)

The Church Fathers first developed the concept of “God’s First Book”, but in the 21st century we are nearly illiterate, due to increasingly artificial environments, more and more ardent focus on the virtual, and a tendency to think of purpose, meaning, and value as subjective, not natural. Wyoming Catholic College was founded to help students re-learn to read God’s First Book through the combination of immersion in nature, a technological fast, and Catholic liberal education. Drawing on Lewis, Pieper, and Maritain I’ll consider the knowledge our students gain through direct immersion in nature and note challenges in rediscovering how to read this first book.



Bio: Kyle Washut has been involved with Wyoming Catholic College since its inception, first as the inaugural Assistant Dean for student life, then as a professor, and now, has served as the Academic Dean since 2019. He is a graduate of Thomas Aquinas College in California, and then pursued his graduate studies in theology at the International Theological Institute outside of Vienna, Austria. His area of focus has been the work of the Greek Church Fathers, the theology of Thomas Aquinas, and the tradition of prayer and fasting in the Eastern Christian tradition. Since coming to Wyoming Catholic College, Kyle has spent over three months (collectively) on various outdoor expeditions with the students (including the 21-day freshmen expedition), as well as horse-packing trips and weeks on the ranch.

**“‘There Was a Child Went Forth’: Birth and Nature in Poetry”**

10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | Room 206/207 | Chair: Jennifer Newsome Martin (University of Notre Dame)

“Earth, a Shadow of Heaven? Milton’s Dynamic Eden in *Paradise Lost*”

Megan Meyer (University of Notre Dame)

This paper dives into John Milton’s rendering of the Garden of Eden in his poem *Paradise Lost*, examining the surprising relationships between prelapsarian Eden, Heaven, and postlapsarian Earth and concluding in a celebration of the ways the fallen created world can still be a place of goodness, beauty, and continued growth.

Bio: Megan Meyer graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 2022 with degrees in Music and the Program of Liberal Studies. She currently teaches second grade at St. Thomas More Academy, a new classical school in South Bend, and loves sharing the beauties of poetry and creation with her students.

“Nativity and Human Action in Dante’s *Commedia*”

Dominic Aquila (The University of St. Thomas)

This paper discusses the theme of nativity in Dante’s *Commedia*, illuminated by Hannah Arendt’s idea of nativity as a philosophical concept. Nativity has a twofold meaning: we are “newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth,” and our words and actions are “like a second birth.” The theme of nativity crescendos to the final Canto of *Paradiso* with the birth of Christ. Here nativity as a new beginning merges with an historical event that radically changed human history.

Bio: Dr. Dominic Aquila has 30 years of experience in public and private higher education. Aquila is also a Trustee and Chair of the Council of Scholars of the American Academy of Liberal Education, a member of the Council of Independent Colleges Task Force for Chief Academic Officers and Chief Financial Officers, and an active participant and lecturer in the national Fides et Ratio seminars for Catholic university and college faculty. His areas of research include music and culture and higher education administration. He can also speak on American and European history.

**“God’s Recreation”: Darkness and Birth in the works of Eleanor Farjeon and Caryl****Houselander****Betsy Fentress (Independent Scholar)**

Although Eleanor Farjeon and Caryl Houselander were British literary contemporaries in the first half of the 20th century, at a cursory level, there seems to be scant evidence that they had any correspondence, let alone friendship. Despite their seemingly separate lives, their work overlaps not only with religious themes, but equally, creation and recreation abound in their work. They expressed through hymns, poetry, and prose darkness as fundamental to the anticipation and unfolding of “birth”—firstly in the natural world, and secondly in watchfulness of Christ’s birth and, hence, His everlasting love. Both Houselander and Farjeon have much to offer in their deep appreciation for nature and how it can inform the spiritual life; new life must begin in darkness and secrecy. Their poetic expression of that truth is a gift to the believer, and a point of entry to the nonbeliever.

Bio: Betsy Fentress is the co-author of *Pecans: Recipes and History of An American Nut* (Rizzoli); *Almonds: Recipes, History, Culture* (Gibbs Smith) and *The Bryant Family Vineyard Cookbook* (Andrews McMeel). A professional writer and editor, Betsy has a bachelor’s degree from the Missouri School of Journalism and spent time in the graduate English program at Louisiana State University. She lives in St. Louis, Missouri with her husband, Sam, where they raised their six children, and now have four grandchildren. She spoke at the dCEC Conference in Fall 2019 and in Winter 2020 on hospitality and the gospel.



“Finding God in All People and Circumstances: Criminal Justice and the Imago Dei”

Saturday, November 12, 10:45–12:00 p.m. | Room 215 | Chair: Rev. John Paul Kimes (Notre Dame Law School)

“Honoring the Inherent Goodness of Defendants & Victims: Implications for Criminal Laws and Penalties”

Cecelia Klingele (University of Wisconsin Law School)

If we were to look with love on those who commit crime and are victimized by it and see in them the image of God, what would change in our justice system? Professor Klingele will discuss the ways in which substantive laws and criminal penalties might change if we were to look at people who commit crime as fundamentally good and redeemable, and at people who suffer from the effects of crime as worthy of genuine support and protection.

Bio: Cecelia Klingele is an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin Law School, where she teaches courses in criminal law, Constitutional criminal procedure, policing, and sentencing and corrections. She is also a faculty associate of the Frank J. Remington Center, the La Follette School of Public Affairs, and the Institute for Research on Poverty. Her past work has focused on challenges in community corrections, correctional programming interventions, and the treatment of violence within the criminal legal system. She is a member of the executive board of the Lumen Christi Institute's [Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network](#) (CCJRN) and the leadership team of the [Society of Christian Legal Scholars](#). After receiving her J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 2005, Professor Klingele served as a law clerk to Chief Judge Barbara B. Crabb of the United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin, Judge Susan H. Black of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, and Associate Justice John Paul Stevens of the United States Supreme Court. She returned to the University of Wisconsin in 2009 as a visiting assistant professor, and has been a permanent faculty member since 2011. Professor Klingele and her husband live in Madison. They have six grown children, and six more at home who ensure life is never boring.

“The Imago Dei and Solitary Confinement”

Mike Cassidy (University of Notre Dame Law School)



This paper discusses how prolonged solitary confinement injures the human dignity of prisoners and how the practice affects the pursuit of the beatific vision.

Bio: Mike Cassidy is a third-year law student at Notre Dame Law School and a Sorin Fellow with the de Nicola Center of Ethics and Culture. Before law school, Mike spent 3 years with FOCUS, the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, at the University of Maryland. He is planning to practice as a state prosecutor in Texas after graduating in 2023. Mike has been researching prolonged solitary confinement and its constitutionality.

“Punishment and Human Dignity”

Marah McLeod (Notre Dame Law School)

Professor McLeod will discuss how prison conditions would be transformed were we to acknowledge the dignity of those confined within them

Bio: Marah Stith McLeod joined Notre Dame Law School in 2016. She teaches criminal law and criminal procedure and studies legal and ethical problems in these areas. Her scholarship explores the distribution of decisional power in the criminal justice system and the theory and practice of criminal punishment, including the death penalty. McLeod attended Yale Law School, where she was notes editor of the Yale Law Journal. She served as a law clerk to Judge Diarmuid O’Scannlain of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and to Justice Clarence Thomas of the U.S. Supreme Court. She also served as an Attorney-Adviser in the Office of Legal Counsel in the U.S. Department of Justice. After her government work, McLeod joined Sidley Austin LLP in Chicago and became a civil litigator and pro bono counsel in death penalty cases. She taught legal writing at Columbia Law School prior to coming to Notre Dame. McLeod studied political theory at Harvard University, after which she spent a year working with Mother Teresa’s sisters in a home for handicapped orphans in Kolkata, India. McLeod now has four beloved children of her own.

“Redemptive Sight: Seeing Christ in the Courtroom”

Hon. Thomas More Donnelly (Cook County Circuit Court)

Judge Donnelly will discuss the ways in which seeing defendants and victims as inherently good would change the practices of courts and courtroom actors.



Bio: Appointed by Illinois Supreme Court a Cook County Circuit Judge on December 3, 2021, after nearly twenty years' service as an Associate Judge, he sits in the Law Division, Commercial Calendar, presiding over motions and trials in business disputes. For ten years before coming to the Commercial Calendar, he heard personal injury trials. He has presided over nearly four hundred jury trials. He serves on the faculty of the National Judicial College. Past board chair of the Illinois Judicial College Board, he currently serves as a board member. He served as the Reporter for the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Professional Responsibility (1996-2000). Before becoming a judge, he clerked for the Honorable Mary Ann G. McMorrow and served as an assistant public defender for thirteen years. Tom has taught at Loyola Law School since 1987. He directed Loyola's Philip H. Corboy Trial Advocacy Fellowship for twenty years from 1995-2016. He has taught trial advocacy at the University of Chicago Law School in the Mandel Legal Aid Clinic. He has lectured at Washington and Lee Law School, Marquette Law School, and DePaul Law School. He serves as president of Lumen Christi's Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network. Tom serves on the advisory boards/committees for Loyola's Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage, the Athenaeum Center for Thought and Culture, and St. Gregory's Hall. He served as president of the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago from 2015-16, which had named him 2014 Catholic Lawyer of the Year; he has served on the Guild's board since 1988. Married to Anne Wicker, they have four sons and live in Queen of Apostles parish where he teaches RCIA.



“What Women Are: The *Imago Dei* in Creation”

10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | Room 216 | Chair: Mary Hallan FioRito (de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture)

“Sexually Dimorphic Rational Creatures: Toward a Natural Law Basis for Sex Discrimination Law”

Erika Bachiochi (Ethics & Public Policy Center)

Sex discrimination law has long been philosophically grounded on a classically liberal (Millian) basis with a mechanistic anthropology that views reproductive difference in terms of biological “function.” A natural law approach would instead view reproductive difference not as a distinction in function, but through the richer, thicker ground of maternal and paternal responsibilities.

Bio: Erika Bachiochi is a Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a Senior Fellow at the Abigail Adams Institute. Her newest book, *The Rights of Women: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*, was published by Notre Dame Press in 2021.

“Women-Annihilating Transhumanism”

Leah Libresco Sargeant (Other Feminisms)

Transhumanism can sound like a high-tech proposition—brain implants, plastic surgery, augmented vision. But, if transhumanism represents a rejection of the goodness of God's creation, the most mainstream transhumanism is the perspective that women's bodies are intrinsically flawed, that being a woman is a problem to be overcome, and that technology can help. Women's bodies are treated as part of a larger machine, where any individual piece is replaceable or improvable. Women offer a portrait of the unjust demands that more choice or seeming freedom to improve on our bodies will bring. When the body is seen as a faulty tool, our frailties are bugs to engineer around, not part of the goodness of our creation, binding us to each other.

Bio: Leah Libresco Sargeant runs Other Feminisms, a substack community, and is the author of *Building the Benedict Option*.



“And God Found It Very Good: Sexual Difference & Equality”

Pia de Solenni (Independent Scholar)

The Genesis narrative of creation indicates a theological perspective in which women and men are part of God’s original plan of creation. As St. John Paul II noted, the differences between woman and man existed before the fall – the tensions between man and woman are a result of the fall. The previous centuries have introduced much in the way of gender and feminist theories, in an effort to construct a narrative to understand sexual differentiation. This paper proposes a return to the original Christian narrative, read in an authentic context, to address sexual differentiation such that it is seen to be something constructive and even essential for humanity.

Bio: Pia de Solenni, SThD is a theologian, ethicist, and cultural analyst. She was a principal founder of the Global Institute of Church Management. Previously, she served as Chancellor of the Diocese of Orange, California, and Theological Advisor to the Bishop. Her work has appeared in various publications including *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, *The Washington Post*, *National Catholic Reporter*, *Our Sunday Visitor*, and *National Review Online*. She is also a consultant member of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas.



“Praise Him All Creatures Here Below”

**Saturday, November 12, 10:45–12:00 p.m. | Room B01 | Chair: Fr. Gregory Haake, CSC
(University of Notre Dame)**

“Behold, I Make All Things New: the Profane Made Sacred in the Liturgy”

Patrick Gouker (Saint Meinrad Seminary)

Revisiting various homilies from Benedict’s pontificate, this paper considers those elements of creation on which, according to the Pope Emeritus, is built the whole sacramental world. Further, it expresses how an understanding of this inherent sacramentality of created nature relates to humans, as created beings, and their telos.

Bio: A 2022 graduate of the University of Notre Dame’s Department of Theology, Patrick Gouker is now a seminarian for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. He is currently studying at St. Meinrad Seminary. His paper considers the idea of the sacramentality of created things as expressed by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

“*Homo liturgicus* and His Revolution: The Liturgical Vocation of the Human Person in the Cosmic Context of Creation”

Rev. Andrij Hlabse, S.J. (University of Notre Dame)

This paper examines the fundamental implications of the human person’s status as a rational creature with a liturgical vocation as priest of creation. The liturgy of the Church, the locus in which Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition have met with the lived history of groups and individuals in the act of worship throughout the Church’s history, is taken as a primary source. Liturgical theology and anthropology place the human person within the dynamic context of living relationships with God, others, and creation in a cosmic vision. This setting allows for the rediscovery of the sapiential dimensions of theology, in short of the *homo liturgicus* and his revolution.

Bio: Fr. Andrij Hlabse is a Ph.D. student in theology at the University of Notre Dame, where he focuses on Greek patristic theology and Latin-Byzantine relations through the year 1600. Prior to his studies at Notre Dame, Fr. Andrij completed a Licentiate degree in Patristic and Eastern Christian



theology at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. He also holds graduate degrees from the Pontifical Gregorian University (theology) and Fordham University (philosophy). Fr. Andrij is a Jesuit and a priest of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church.

“Religion and Creatureliness: A Thomistic Account of Why We Must Embrace Being Creatures in Order to Worship”

Sr. Mary Christa Nutt (Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, MI)

If we tend to think of religion in merely sociological terms or even as irrelevant or harmful to personal fulfillment, Thomas Aquinas saw religion first as an interior virtue fundamental for the development of freedom, integration, and ultimately the attainment of happiness. The authenticity of religiosity to the Aquinate is deeply impacted by whether or not one accepts what it is to be a human creature, that is, accepting metaphysical contingency and dependence upon an all-provident, transcendent and good God, both Creator and Father. This paper also highlights what’s at stake individually and societally if we set aside religion.

Bio: Brief biographical sketch: Sister Mary Christa Nutt is a member of the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Michigan, where she serves as the director of intellectual formation and also teaches Thomistic philosophy and theology to the postulants and novices. She is presently her community’s local superior and a member of the General Council of the Institute. Sister earned a baccalaureate, a license of sacred theology, and a doctoral degree in moral theology at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas in Rome. She is working on publishing her first book on freedom and religious obedience.



“On Death and Natural Evils”

Saturday, November 12, 10:45–12:00 p.m. | Room B02 | Chair: Rev. Harrison Ayre
(Maryvale Institute)

“Until *‘the Former Things Have Passed Away:’* Teleology and Chronic Pain”

Kyle Karches (Saint Louis University)

I argue that the absence of teleology in medical science has left physicians unable to discern how to use our treatments wisely in response to chronic pain. I first describe contemporary scientific and clinical approaches to pain and contrast them with Aquinas’s teleological understanding. I then turn to Maurice-Merleau Ponty’s phenomenological account of how the formation of habit influences perception in order to build on Aquinas while incorporating modern insights. I conclude that this conception of pain, oriented by Christian belief about the ends of human life, suggests a better way to help those suffering from chronic pain.

Bio: Kyle E. Karches, MD, PhD is Associate Professor of Internal Medicine and Health Care Ethics at Saint Louis University. He received a BA in Philosophy from the University of Notre Dame and an MD from the University of Chicago, where he also completed his residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in clinical ethics. He also holds an interdisciplinary PhD in Health Care Ethics from Saint Louis University, where he practices general medicine and teaches ethics. He lives in St. Louis with his wife Beth and children Sophia, Grace, and William.

“Would Miscarriage Exist Without the Fall?”

Abigail Jorgensen (University of Notre Dame)

This talk will explore the question of whether miscarriage would exist without the Fall. I will discuss three ways we can implement our understanding of bodies in light of the Fall: 1) understanding and gently sharing Catholic teaching regarding the final destination of unbaptized babies, 2) teaching ourselves to recognize the beauty of the miscarried body, and 3) holding the tension of the “both/and” when we think about the good of the body and the grief of a loss. While the first half of the talk will focus on the abstract and difficult concepts that rise to the fore in discussions of miscarriage, the



second half will provide actionable to-do items and ways for us to live out a proper understanding of miscarriage.

Bio: Abigail "Abby" Jorgensen is a PhD candidate in sociology at the University of Notre Dame and a Notebaert Fellow. She is also a graduate minor in Gender Studies and an affiliate of the Kellogg Institute. Abby cares deeply about using and promoting the use of methodologies that are appropriate, healthy, and beautiful. She is also passionate about supporting families, especially those in formation. Her sociological subfields include methods, family and gender, culture, and politics. Abby is currently working on a project on visual productive methodologies and another using statistics to examine the cultural impacts of political moves toward gender equality cross-nationally over time. Her dissertation involves longitudinal interviews with women in Wisconsin focusing on their views of parenthood and politics. In addition to working as a researcher, a methods consultant, and a Writing Center peer tutor on campus, Abby is also a birth and bereavement doula and childbirth educator.

**“Creation’s Theodicy: Insights from Joseph Ratzinger and the Book of Job”
Emma Miller (University of Notre Dame)**

The breakthrough of evolutionary biology has revealed that creation not only succumbs to death but depends upon death for the development of diverse natural kinds. This revelation challenges the classical stance that prelapsarian man would have been exempt from biological death. In this paper, I will address Ratzinger’s treatment of human biological death in light of both the Fall and modern science, and subsequently I will propose that creation itself offers mankind a theodicy concerning physical death – one which is found within the Book of Job and brought to perfection in Christ’s agony in the garden as the New Adam.

Bio: Emma Miller is a graduate student in the Master of Theological Studies program at the University of Notre Dame, concentrating in History of Christianity. She holds a B.A. in Catholic Studies and Biology from the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.