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Catholic Studies Newsletter

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Spring 2018

# Department of Catholic Studies Newsletter, 1.1

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# DEPARTMENT OF CATHOLIC STUDIES

## NEWSLETTER

1.1

### *From the Chair*

**Michelle Loris, PhD; Psy.D**

I am very delighted to be sending this inaugural Department of Catholic Studies Newsletter.

The Department is home to the University's signature core seminars, "the CIT seminars." The Department of Catholic Studies offers annually nearly 160 sections of the seminars which are facilitated by a core of dedicated and talented faculty who are engaged in sustaining the ongoing, interdisciplinary conversation of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition both inside the classroom as well as in extracurricular projects such as the Human Journey colloquia, special lectures, faculty development workshops, outside conferences, and academic publications. Only half way into our second year of official implementation and we have been involved in many activities and events.

Among the highlights of department activities over the past year: CIT students: attended the annual Commonweal dinner in New York City; visited the Jerusalem exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; engaged in a CIT Seminar for the Papal Nuncio as part of his visit to the University; participated in the presentation of the University's renewed Mission Statement. Faculty in Catholic Studies Department: participated in Fordham University's Conference on the Catholic Literary Imagination; offered several colloquia and

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hosted the Department's Catholic Studies Film Series, and participated in the CIT Salon discussion evenings held twice each semester.

In the spring 2018 semester, the department will co-sponsor the second Bergoglio Lecture which will feature Villanova theologian Massimo Faggioli who will receive an Honorary Doctorate. The department will also host a University wide faculty roundtable discussion led by Mark Bosco, S.J., Vice President of Mission and Catholic Identity at Georgetown University. Several CS faculty will also be presenting at conferences during the spring, including a conference at The Academy of Catholic Thought and Imagination hosted at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, entitled "The Idea of the Catholic University in the 21st Century." The focus of the conference is about how Catholic universities can maintain a vibrant and robust Catholic identity in the 21st Century, a question many Catholic colleges and universities are addressing.

### *The New Catholic Studies Faculty*

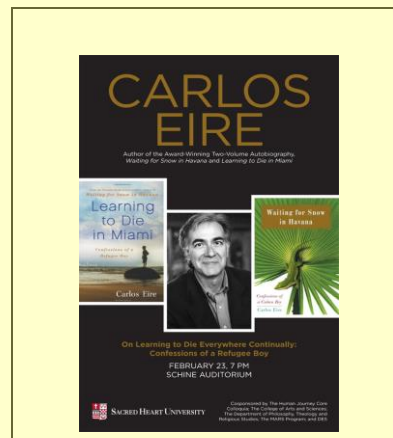
**Cynthia Cameron, PhD**

Dr. Cynthia Cameron is a native of New Jersey but lived most of her adult life in Washington, D.C. She holds a PhD in Theology and Education from Boston College and has as well three Masters Degrees: two in Theology (from Yale Divinity School and Washington Theological Union) and one in Educational Administration (from Catholic University of America). Her area of specialization is religious education (the role of Catholic schools and schooling) and she is also interested in questions of theological anthropology as

it intersects with gender and age -- particularly adolescence. Her research extends around the theological questions and pastoral responses to girls and young women who self-harm, both of which areas of research stem, in part, from her work as a teacher in a Catholic secondary school for girls in DC. A nugget of wisdom for seminar pedagogy that she shares is: "Embrace the silence. Let it linger." Dr. Please see *Cameron* page 4

## ***Dr. Carlos Eire at SHU***

Last March, Carlos Eire, the T. Lawrason Riggs Professor of History and Religious Studies at Yale University, gave an address entitled, “The Catholic Intellectual Tradition at Yale University” to the Sacred Heart community. Dr. Eire discussed that he began a new program at Yale that allows undergraduates to study the Catholic Intellectual Tradition through a two-semester, Great Books seminar. He has noted that interest and enrollment in the program has increased since its implementation. Dr. Eire’s lecture and conversation with the Sacred Heart community allowed for a dialogue on the different experiences of each university’s respective CIT seminars.



## ***Bishop Frank Caggiano at SHU***

In March the Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano, bishop of the Bridgeport diocese, gave the inaugural talk of the University’s Jorge Bergoglio Lecture Series. The lecture was titled “Pope Francis and the Social Gospel: Where Do We Go From Here’ and was co-sponsored by the Department of Catholic Studies, the Office of Mission and Catholic Identity and the Diocese of Bridgeport.

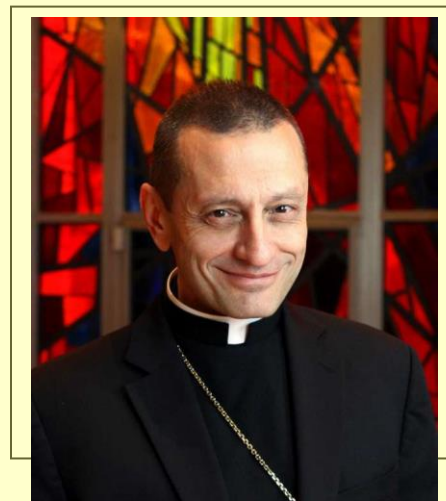
In his presentation, Bishop Caggiano said that Pope Francis “cut from a different cloth,” gathering attention from the world and looking for renewal

of our lives. Pope Francis, he said, is known as “the pope of mercy and passion, the pope of welcome” and so offers to all Catholics—all people—a model of hospitality to and care for others. Bishop Caggiano went on to say that Pope Francis is clear about the need for the Church and all Catholics to address the challenges of modern life, such as apathy and consumerism and so the Pope is calling on all Catholics to be missionary disciples, to live according to the Seven Principles of Catholic Social Justice teaching: 1) Human dignity, meaning every human is made in God’s likeness and has a right to respect and a proper place in life; 2) Solidarity, meaning that every

Please see *Bishop* on page 5

*“We must look deep into the Catholic faith and live the social gospel—making real the teachings of Jesus through the world, witness and community life... to live charity and justice in concrete ways... to be truthful in faith.”*  
~ Bishop Frank Caggiano

***Bishop Frank Caggiano***



## ***Meet the Catholic Studies Faculty***

### ***Thomas Hurley, PhD***

Thomas Joseph Hurley grew up in Minnesota and Illinois, and lived in the Washington, DC area for 10+ years before moving to Connecticut to teach at SHU. Dr. Hurley holds a Ph.D. in Theology from the John Paul II Institute in Washington, DC.

Dr. Hurley decided to study theology for multiple reasons, but one is that he believes that theology can encompass anything that can be related to questions about God, which in effect means theology encompasses anything and everything. Within the field of theology, his specific areas of interest include theological anthropology and social/political theology and also the works of both Thomas Aquinas and John Paul II who, Dr. Hurley says, both bear powerful witness that the world and human nature

are good and beautiful, and grounded in love, although they do so in different ways.

Dr. Hurley states that when he originally read the position description for teaching the CIT at Sacred Heart a couple years ago, he felt as if he were made to teach these courses since his specialization in theology was a way of being able to talk about anything, and he did his graduate studies at a place where they thought it made perfect sense to require

Please see *Hurley* on page 4

### ***Daniel Rober, PhD***

Dr. Daniel Rober lives in Manhattan (not far from the UN) with his wife Mary Beth and their two children, Genevieve and Daniel Charles. He received his PhD in Theology from Fordham University; prior to Fordham, he received his M. Div. from the University of Chicago and his BA from Notre Dame in Indiana. He specializes in Systematic Theology, particularly contemporary philosophical theology, which he likes because in that field of theology, he is able to do constructive and synthetic work using insights from other areas such as Biblical Studies, historical theology, and moral theology. Systematic theology can also be very interdisciplinary and very contemporary, concerned with applying the insights of the tradition to new challenges in today's world, such as his current work on Catholic theology and

secularization. Dr. Rober says that he likes teaching the CIT seminars because he likes being able to put students in touch with the important questions raised by great texts and ideas, which he believes the seminar format fosters well. He also believes that the valuable part of the CIT courses is being able to help students grapple with issues and ideas that are going to affect their lives. In fact, Dr. Rober says, "My goal is always for the students to feel both that they learned something new about the CIT and the thinkers we read, but most importantly that they grew both in their ability to have a respectful conversation with one another and also see how important ideas matter for their lives and for the world around them."

Dr. Rober has enjoyed working at SHU because he  
Please see *Rober* on page 4

**Cameron** from page 1

Cameron enjoys hiking, sailing, and reading mystery novels, and has one dog, Levi, a goldendoodle.

**Mary Bauer, MA**

Mary Bauer was born and raised in Michigan, but spent most of her adult life in the Washington DC area (on the Virginia side of the river) working for the federal government for 26 years. She holds an MA in French from George Mason University in Fairfax, VA., and has studied classical voice for over 20 years.

**Rober** from page 3

appreciates its warm, collegial atmosphere, and its strong Catholic mission grounded in Vatican II and the CIT.

On a personal note, Dr. Rober notes that he is the official “cook” of the Rober household and his major avocation is sacred music: he has been involved in choirs for the better part of 25 years and during the choral season (September–June) he sings baritone every week at the 11:00 Mass at St. Malachy’s, The Actor’s Chapel in Times Square. Dr. Rober has also recently undertaken a new scholarly

Ms. Bauer is passionate about literature, especially French literature, and also has a great love of writing and extensive experience in writing for the federal government and as a freelance writer. She thinks that SHU is a wonderful place to teach because it’s a small school, which means she can “really get to know students rather than lecturing on a platform in front of a sea of hundreds of faces” and at SHU, “we can explore core values and priorities as part of our course curriculum... Best of all, I have the privilege of helping students explore questions about what really matters in life, which helps them define who they really want to be as they mature.”

project, analyzing the influence of de Lubac’s theology of nature and grace on Charles Taylor’s work and by examining what is needed in a Catholic theological response to the secular, a response that he believes is more necessary now than ever before. Secularity is a fact of life in contemporary Euro–American society, Dr. Rober insists, and it’s important for Catholic theology—and Catholic theologians—to think through what that means and how to respond to it.

**Hurley** from page 3

frequent discussions of authors from Homer to Jane Austen as part of a theology degree. The interdisciplinary nature of the CIT really appealed to him and he thinks that the nature of the CIT classes also makes the relations between teacher and students important in a particular way. Dr. Hurley admits that he himself often struggled with speaking up in class discussions, so he understands if students also are initially uncomfortable with the seminar style. He tells his students that the class is meant to be a conversation, a kind of “book club with grades.”

*“I hope for a lot of things for my students, but I guess basically I hope to help my students to think more about questions regarding the meaning of the world and their own meaning as human beings, and to understand that it is important (and perhaps can even be interesting and fun sometimes!) to think about and discuss those questions for themselves, rather than simply accepting without reflection and evaluation any meanings mediated to them through society, employers, media, and technology.”*

~ Thomas Hurley

*Bishop* from page 2

individual is part of a larger group, and each member is dependent on one another; 3) Subsidiarity, suggesting that every community should have the right to make its own decisions, and that freedom is better ensured on a local level; 4) A call to family, community and participation, with family at the heart; 5) the Preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, which gives the unfortunate a voice; 6) the Dignity of work and workers, recognizing that there is something fundamental in humans to want to work and be creative; and 7) Basic responsibility to care for the world and live in peace with creation. The Bishop called on all in the audience (standing room only!) to take up the challenge of realizing the accomplishment of each of the Seven Principles not only in each individual life but in the wider reaches of community and society.



*Bishop Caggiano speaks to SHU students*

## ***Catholic Studies Faculty Publications***

**Brent J. Little and Mark Bosco, S.J., eds. *Revelation and Convergence: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*. CUA, 2017.**

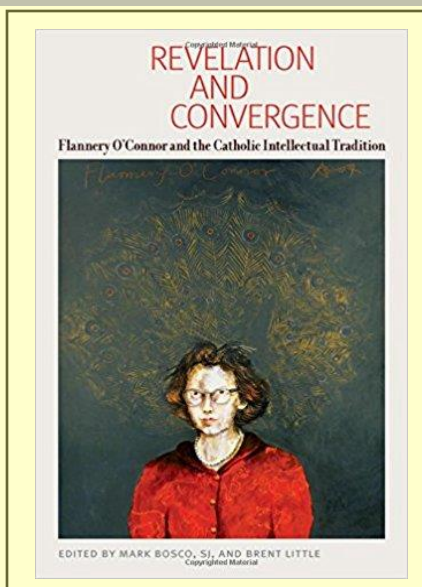
Catholic Studies faculty Dr. Brent J. Little has recently co-edited with Mark Bosco, S. J., a collection of essays about the American writer Flannery O'Connor, titled: ***Revelation and Convergence: Flannery O'Connor and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition***. He explains that the collection of essays were originally presented in much shorter form at a conference dedicated to Flannery O'Connor which was held at Loyola University Chicago in 2011. Dr. Little has long been interested in O'Connor's work and "the imaginative and creative way she engages with the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, particularly her often startling depictions of grace's presence in the world. O'Connor is an example of a fiction writer who insisted

that her orthodoxy serve as a catalyst for (and not a limitation to) the literary imagination." Dr. Little concedes that O'Connor can be challenging to read, both for students and scholars, because her depiction of faith can come across as "hard," in the sense that she has little patience for a lukewarm faith, yet, he admits that he finds her challenge rewarding because it forces the reader to reflect seriously on issues like faith and grace in a way that eschews comfortable platitudes. Dr. Little also admits that he was continually amazed at how engaged O'Connor was with the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. She

Please see *Little* on page 6

*"Although Thomas Aquinas is the Catholic theologian most discussed in connection to O'Connor's theological imagination, she shared with Augustine a profound belief in Original Sin. Fascinatingly, this belief plays out in her critique of modernity, and its insistence on the autonomous, "rational" person who can construct his own truth. O'Connor, channeling Augustine, would have insisted on the necessity of grace as a corrective to the modern ego. Like Augustine, she regarded human nature, after the Fall, to be inevitably inflicted with the sin of pride."*

*~ Brent Little*



*Little* from page 5

had no formal training in theology or philosophy, but she was remarkably well read in both, not only well known figures, such as Thomas Aquinas or Augustine, but also several other thinkers, such as Léon Bloy and Baron von Hügel, who are relatively obscure and known for the most part only by specialists. Dr. Little believes that the book demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition since Flannery O'Connor's literary vision drew upon Catholic theology, piety, history, and philosophy—as well as dialogued with modern philosophy—while also depicting the social sin of systematic racism. So, in this sense, she embodies the spirit of the CIT seminars.

**Brent J. Little** holds a Master's of theological studies from Boston College and a Ph.D. in Theology from Loyola University.



**Jennifer Reek, PhD.** *A Poetics of Church: Readings and Writing Sacred Spaces of Poetic Dwelling.* Routledge, 2017.

Dr. Reek has written a book that seeks to create “alternatives to more institutional and conventional ways of thinking and of being ‘Church.’” The book includes models of the institutional Catholic Church but moves into more radical and ambiguous textual spaces that Dr. Reek creates by bringing together an unorthodox group of thinkers referred to as ‘poet-companions’: the 16th-century founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius of Loyola, the French thinkers Gaston Bachelard and Héléne Cixous, the French poet Yves Bonnefoy and the English playwright Dennis Potter.



**Jennifer Reek** holds a Ph.D. from the Centre for Literature, Theology and the Arts, University of Glasgow. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Literature and Theology* and *Contemporary Women's Writing*. She also was co-editor of the fourth volume of the Routledge *Power of the Word* series, *Thresholds of Wonder: Poetry, Philosophy and Theology in Conversation*.



**Daniel Rober, PhD.** *Recognizing the Gift: Toward a Renewed Theology of Nature and Grace.* Fortress Press, 2016.

Dr. Rober has written a book which analyzes the theological and cultural debates on the themes of nature and grace in the works of several important (and divergent) twentieth century theologians including Henri de Lubac, Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Jean-Luc Marion and Paul Ricoeur.

