
COMMUNIQUÉ

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COMMUNIO STUDY CIRCLES

What is a Study Circle?

What distinguishes the Study Circle is the *communio* spirit in which the activities are undertaken—being at once at the heart of the Church and at the center of the world. Within this spirit members fashion their meetings according to the interest of the group. Most groups either begin or end their meetings with prayer (e.g., Evening Prayer) and many include a “social hour” for refreshments, or even hold their discussions over dinner. The following reports offer many examples of how our Study Circles decide to shape their discussions. If you would like to start a Study Circle in your area, please contact the *Communio* office at 202-526-0251, or communio@aol.com.

Phoenix, Arizona

Anthony DiStefano writes of the Phoenix group’s evening meetings at Rosie’s Irish Pub, where the group meets every other Monday evening. The group selects their readings mostly from the *Communio* articles, both from the current issue and also some from previous issues, but also occasionally from other sources. Although the group has considered reading a book together in the near future, they are first planning to study Pope Benedict’s new encyclical on love.

With a group comprised of theology teachers from Xavier College Prep (a local all-girls Catholic school), a campus minister from another local high school, the diocesan Director of Family and Pro-Life Ministries, members of Communion and Liberation, some theology and philosophy students, “and other vagabonds,” Anthony says that they have a “good, entertaining group.” Any and all discussion they have together is “aided by pints of Guinness and the occasional fish and chips platter. And more pints of Guinness!”

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The group looks forward to the next event in the John Paul II lecture series, *The Risk of Education* by Luigi Giussani, given by Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete at the Xavier school. This series hopes to “celebrate and explore the thought and contributions of John Paul II” in many forms, in what the group expects will be a big first night. All in all, Anthony says, “there’s enough diversity of experience and perspective to keep things lively, and a growing sense of the communion articulated by the founders of the journal.”

Coronado, California

The Coronado Circle has been meeting regularly to discuss current *Communio* articles. In their meeting during the summer and early fall, the group talked about the topic of the Lord’s Baptism, using the articles in the Spring 2005 issue as a springboard for the discussion. In November, they shifted tracks to David Schindler’s article and some other writers regarding the recent ANT-OAR debate. According to Jim Holman, this conversation generated a lot of participation from the various members, “with few silences.”

Although the group consists of many faculty members and students from Thomas Aquinas College, the Catholic Answers group, and some scientists, the Circle membership will change this summer. The Navy chaplain and Trappist monk, Father Aidan Logan, at whose residence the community meets, will head off to the Naval Academy, while two TAC members will leave for graduate school on the East Coast.

Bridgewater, Connecticut

The Promisek *Communio* Study Circle resumed meeting in Fall 2005, and now gathers on the first Sunday of every month, “in the ‘School’ building on the Promisek land.” The group consists of about ten members and focuses mainly on articles from *Communio*, though these are often supplemented with other related articles. The first article of the year was Cardinal Ratzinger’s “The Beautiful is the Good,” which “turned out to presage the current encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, in important ways.” Roger Duncan says that the group was “also led, from reading Livio Melina’s ‘Epiphany of Love,’ to study Pope John Paul II’s ‘The Way of Beauty: A Letter to Artists.’” According to Roger, this “aesthetic emphasis” reflects the group’s affirmation of Balthasar’s own recommendation to begin with a theology of aesthetics, as well as demonstrates the interests of many of the Promisek members.

Lafayette, Louisiana

Since the election of Pope Benedict XVI the Lafayette Study Circle has changed its meeting format, says coordinator Fr. Bryce Sibley. Instead of limiting the topics to the articles found in *Communio* and meeting four times a year, the group now reads different essays and sections of Pope Benedict's books and meets every month. During the summer, the small community was even able to meet every week. Fr. Bryce reports that membership has increased to about thirty people each meeting. He has compiled two volumes of the Pope's writings to cover various topics and to represent the wide breadth of Benedict's writings, and he notes with enthusiasm that "everyone seems very excited to study the thought of our Holy Father."

Standish, Maine

We are very pleased to announce that a new study circle has begun in Maine. The coordinator, Dr. Connie Lasher of St. Joseph's College of Maine, reports an initial membership of about ten. In hopes that Bishop Malone will be able to attend the meetings, the group plans to arrange their gatherings around his schedule. Other members include members of the college faculty, Catholic philosophers, theologians, priests, and religious.

Boston, Massachusetts

Following the structure of a similar event the group held two years ago to explicate a *Communio* article on Schubert, a married couple in the group held a recital and lecture to develop three articles on music from the Spring 2005 issue. Charles Navien, a doctor in music theory, who is also an organist and pianist, together with his wife, Susan, a professionally-trained soprano vocalist, spoke, played, and sang the spirit and meaning of the articles. The coordinator of the study circle, Gregory Gillis, says that "the sessions were much appreciated and highly informative." The meeting was opened to the public, bringing in about twenty-five observers to share in the experience of music and conversation.

We are happy to include the program of this interesting event for all of our readers and study circles to enjoy:

Organ Prelude: "Christ, Our Lord Came to Jordan"
J.S. Bach

Opening Prayer: Pastor Ed Bove

Opening Hymn: "Come, Christian, Join to Sing"

Reflection I: "Art and Faith," article by Jonah Lynch
Hymn: "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," J.S. Bach

Reflection II: "Bach's Musical Treatment of Jesus' Baptism"

Article by Matthew and Oliver O'Donovan

Solo: "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," J.S. Bach

Chorale: "Christ, Our Lord, Came to Jordan"

Solesmes Chant, Mode VIII

Two settings for organ by J.S. Bach

Hymn: "When Jesus Came to Jordan"

Cantata Selections: "Wachet Auf" BWV 140

Duet: "Mein Freund ist mein!"

Chorale prelude: "Zion Hears the Watchman Calling"

Hymn: "Wake, Awake for Night is Flying"

Reflection III: "A Triune Conversation in Mozart"

Article by Mark Freer

Choral Motet: "Ave Verum Corpus," W.A. Mozart

Solo Motet: "Exultate, Jubilate" (K. 165), W.A. Mozart

Closing Reflection

Closing Hymn: "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

Benediction: Pastor Ed Bove

Postlude: "Fugue in E-flat Major" (KV153), W.A. Mozart

Nebraska

If you live in Nebraska and are interested in participating in a *Communio* Study Circle, there are many fellow Nebraskans who are interested in starting groups in various areas. We will have more information about these new circles in the future and invite you to contact the *Communio* office if you are interested in taking part.

Durham, North Carolina

There is also a new study circle in Durham that has been meeting on a monthly basis since August 2005. They meet every first Thursday of the month at Kyle Smith's house.

Kyle says: "Every month we select one article, which the group members will discuss over wine and cheese." It is usually an article from the current issue of *Communio* but "sometimes we dip into back issues depending upon interest and the consensus of the group." The group has a membership of about 20 people, although there is a core group of seven to nine that usually attend the meetings. Most members, both graduate students and faculty, are related either to the Religion Department or to Divinity School at Duke University, although the small community also has regular attendees from the department of political theory, as well as a theology teacher from a Catholic high school in Raleigh and the pastor of a nearby Franciscan parish in Durham.

At the March meeting, they planned to discuss Pope Benedict's new encyclical.

South Bathgate, North Dakota

Lydia Reynolds writes: "Since last year, our Virgil Michel Center, which sponsors our Study Circle, has itself become situated as one of 6 or 7 circles of our Christian lay association.

In November Petroc Willey of Maryvale Institute in Birmingham, U.K., visited us for several days, giving talks here and in another place in the Fargo Diocese. Now we are about to embark on the distance learning course on the Catechism offered by Maryvale Institute. We have a study group with 11 people registered, and designed, for the first sequence, to explore the possibility of recommending this for our local parish adult learning.

Our other 'Circles,' all emphasizing the theme of cooperation (that theme taken, a few years ago, from one of Pope Benedict's books) are moving forward according to various initiatives: in producing a children's curriculum; cooperative homeschooling; a "house of healing"; hospitality; and a housing co-op.

Perhaps all this goes beyond a study circle summary . . . Nevertheless it is the direct outcome of the 'words' we have studied!"

Jersey City, New Jersey

The New Jersey *Communio* study group continues to meet quarterly, discussing articles and topics from the most recent issue of *Communio*. In the latest meeting, the group read and discussed the two Ratzinger articles from the Summer 2005 issue on Europe and Moral Theology—"Europe in the Crisis of Cultures" and "The Renewal of Moral Theology: Perspectives of Vatican II and *Veritatis splendor*." According to Matt Laracy, the circle has about six to eight regular attendees and a few "occasional" members. He says that the group "will welcome any fellow 'Communio aficionados.'"

Waterloo, Ontario

Peter Erb writes: "Throughout the past year, the Waterloo Communio Study Circle continued to meet on the first Friday of each month to discuss selected articles in the journal. In addition, we sponsored a Fall symposium on Guardini, at which the major paper was presented by Dr. Tina Marshall on Guardini's *Spirit of the Liturgy*. As with previous symposia, the major paper was preceded by morning Mass and followed, after lunch, by an afternoon of responses, a musical interlude, evening prayer, and a closing dinner. Plans are in place for a follow-up gathering on 29 May with Dr. Vivian Ligo of Toronto. Dr Marshall's paper is presently being prepared for publication and will appear as part of our Occasional Papers series." Individuals wishing copies of the papers should write to Peter at his Waterloo address or perb@wlu.ca

Center Valley, Pennsylvania

The Center Valley Study Circle met five times during the Fall 2005 semester, at the homes of Drs. Larry Chapp, Rodney Howsare, and Stephen Loughlin. The group covered a large number of articles during those meetings: Michael Hanby's "Creation without Creationism: Toward a Theological Critique of Darwinism," D. C. Schindler's "Surprised by Truth: The Drama of Reason in Fundamental Theology," David L. Schindler, "Creation and Nuptiality: A Reflection on Feminism in Light of Schmemmann's Liturgical Theology," Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Introduction to Christianity: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," and David Bentley Hart, "No Shadow of Turning" (an article from the journal *Pro Ecclesia*).

Larry Chapp says "attendance at the meetings has been excellent," averaging around 20 to 25 people, with a large number of undergraduate students from DeSales University, and regular visits from David C. Schindler. The first study circle meeting of the new semester will be held at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, where the group will discuss Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's article, "Europe in the Crisis of Cultures."

Memphis, Tennessee

We are happy to welcome another new group to our list: several families joined together in 2005 to form a new circle in Memphis, Tennessee. Glenna Bradshaw writes that the group started because the members "very much feel the need for more solid instruction and reflection on Church teaching." They look forward to much fruitful discussion.

Martinsburg, West Virginia

Here is a great summary of the activities at the study circle in Martinsburg from Don Patthoff:

The Martinsburg Study Circle met four times last year within the biweekly meetings of one of St. Joseph Parish's small faith groups. The ten members of the Shepherd's Gate Christian Life Community were still going through the Ignatian Nineteenth Annotation Spiritual Exercises, and continued to host the Communio Study Circles as part of that process, which began the previous year. Articles were selected from *Communio* to match the themes of four specific weeks. At those meetings others from the parish and the wider community were invited to participate.

The articles selected for discussion were from:

Confession and Reconciliation, Winter 2004, "Beyond Secular Reason: Some Contemporary Challenges for the Life and Thought of the Church," by Archbishop Martínez.

The Baptism in the Jordan, Spring 2005, "The Ages of the

Life of Jesus: The Mystery of the Baptism in the Jordan,” by José Granados.

Love, Summer 2005, “Eternal Happening: God as an Event of Love,” by Antonio López.

Love, Summer 2005, “‘Husbands, love your wives as your own bodies’: Is Nuptial Love a Case of Love or Its Paradigm?” by Margaret H. McCarthy.

Organizing the *Communio* Study Group within the small faith community format has worked well over the past two years. The pastor of St. Joseph, Fr. John DiBacco, is currently working with the study group to explore ways that this group might offer the exercises and the *Communio* experience to more members of the parish and other small faith groups.

Communio has been key to enriching the discussion and prayer life of the members of the group. As one of the guests, a state senator, commented after participating in one of the meetings, “this is what I have been hungering for, and now it is finally being satisfied.”

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The Marquette University *Communio* Study Circle is settling down again after a period of transition last year and a farewell to the Jesuit Residence they have visited for previous meetings. Study circle coordinator Chris Carr notes that the “good Fathers and their cookies are sorely missed.”

Because the group consists mainly of graduate students, the circle has also changed their meeting day to Wednesday afternoons. They now meet in a conference room in the Raynor Library. Although there have been some unexpected changes, Chris says “early indications” show that “the new time and place will permit renewed interest and increased attendance in the study circle.”

THE CHESTERTON INSTITUTE FOR FAITH & CULTURE

Although there is no formal Study Circle established in Oxford, Stratford Caldecott hopes one might be developed later in the year. In the meantime, the journal *Second Spring* and the associated website (www.secondspring.co.uk) fields the team’s attempt to convey and explore a “*Communio*” vision of the Church and the world. There are a number of *Communio* articles and works by *Communio* contributors available on the website.

The seventh issue of *Second Spring* has been delayed due to printing problems in Canada and fundraising efforts for the Chesterton Institute. The journal resumes February, 2006. Complimentary copies will be widely distributed, along with information about the state of subscriptions to encourage readers to subscribe or renew. Of particular interest for this

forum, the seventh issue of *Second Spring* includes an article on “Technology and the Body” by *Communio* editor Adrian J. Walker.

Information about current events can be found on the *Second Spring* website, including the inaugural “Study Day on the Theology of the Body” to be conducted at Oxford (20 May), a Summer School with Clare Asquith and Peter Milward on “Shakespeare and the Catholic Imagination” (27 July to 3 August 2006), and the first Oxford Tolkien Conference at Exeter College (21 to 25 August 2006).

For a complete list of current Study Circles, please see the list printed inside the journal. New members and new Circles are always welcome.

UPCOMING THEMES in COMMUNIO

- The Wedding at Cana
 - *Deus caritas est*
 - Fatherhood
- Aquinas and *Ressourcement*

BACK ISSUES of COMMUNIO

Back issues of the journal are available from the *Communio* office. Here is a sample of available issues, listed by theme or lead article. A full list of available titles can be found on our website, communio-icr.com.

Winter 1993: The Integrity of Reason

Summer 1995: Catholicism & the Liberation of Culture

Winter 2000: Justice, Pardon, and Justification

Summer 2002: Christian Community

Fall 2002: Providence

Winter 2002: Freedom, Transcendence, & the Good

Fall 2004: Consecration and the States of Life

Winter 2004: Confession and Reconciliation

Fall 2005: The World

Price: \$10 each. To order, please send selected titles and check to the *Communio* office at the address below, or order online by credit card.

Sara Trudeau, Editor, COMMUNIQUÉ
Communio, P.O. Box 4557, Washington, D.C. 20017
 Phone: (202) 526-0251, Fax: (202) 526-1934