
COMMUNIQUE

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COMMUNIO STUDY CIRCLES

Together with the usual immersion in various *Communio* articles, the study circle groups this year have, not surprisingly, taken a common interest in reading Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical, *Deus caritas est*. The interest is only the beginning, as groups also ponder the Pontiff's Regensburg lecture, books written while he was Cardinal-prefect of the CDF, and other articles, addresses, and essays by the new Pope.

The new study circles in Maine and Nebraska are off to a good start, as we will hear from the two circle chairs.

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. New circles are very welcome.

Phoenix, Arizona

"Greetings from the desert," Anthony DiStefano of the Phoenix Study Circle remarks, as the *Communio* Circle begins a reading of Augustine's *Confessions*. "We continue to meet every other Monday night at Rosie McCaffrey's Irish Pub, with pints of Guinness and genial Christian fellowship. Our recent readings have included various articles from *Communio*, Larry Chapp's article on *Deus caritas est* (with some of its cosmological implications), and Chesterton's *The Everlasting Man*.

"In February 2007, Greg Wolfe, the editor and publisher of *Image*, will deliver the 2nd annual John Paul II Lecture at Xavier. This year's lecture will be on the tradition of Christian humanism; it is part of an attempt by Catholics here in the Valley of the sun to draw more attention to the contributions of our beloved late Pope. Members of the *Communio* group are involved in this series, as well."

Bridgewater, Connecticut

The Promisek *Communio* Study Circle continues to meet on a monthly basis, with a regular group of six to twelve

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participants. The members continue to focus their attention on the themes of *eros* and *agape* in relation to *Deus caritas est*, reading and discussing, among other things, Charles Williams' "Religion and Love in Dante" and a section from Josef Pieper's *Divine Madness*. At subsequent meetings throughout the year, the group shifted its discussion to the question of life as drama with David L. Schindler's "The Dramatic Nature of Life" and the text, "Vocation and Destiny," a chapter from Louis Lavelle's *The Dilemma of Narcissus*. With the arrival of the latest *Communio*, they returned to the theme on love, reading Cardinal Scola's "The Unity of Love and the Face of Man." They also enjoyed a presentation on icons by the Eastern Rite members of the group.

Boston, Massachusetts

Gregory Gillis reports that the Boston *Communio* Discussion Circle has moved its meetings to a new location. The former location was sold, and the thirteen-year old group sought for a time to find a new place to gather. Finally, one of the members received an invitation from Fr. Grover, the pastor of St. Clement's Parish in the "Back Bay," to hold their monthly meets in one of the function rooms there. St. Clement's Eucharistic Shrine is also the meeting place of many college students, who travel from as far as Boston College. Since October, the group has been meeting in this parish and likes the new venue for its discussions and work. In fact, the group hopes to welcome new members and to encourage other parishioners in the archdiocese to begin new *Communio* discussion circles in their own parishes. The current Study Circle members hope that such groups would "provide a powerful stimulus" in the people to "reap the benefits of Vatican II."

Standish, Maine

This newly-established *Communio* Study Circle met for the first time in August 2006. Organized by Dr. Connie Lasher, Director of the John Paul II Center for Theology & Environmental Studies at St. Joseph's College of Maine, the Study Circle is offered by the Center as an aspect of its service to the academic community and the Diocese of Portland. "We are pleased and grateful to have as a regular member of our Circle, Bishop Richard Malone, whose enthusiastic participation adds a profound ecclesial dimension to our conversation and *communio*." In addition to Bishop Malone, the Study Circle members include theologian and author Monsignor Charles Murphy; Fr. Paul Dumais; Dr. Michael Rombeiro (Philosophy faculty, St. Joseph's College); Prof.

Doug Fox (Professor of Landscape Horticulture, Unity College, Maine); Robert Nadeau, Esquire; Joseph Mailhot (Portland Diocese Campus Ministry Coordinator); Rebecca Hilton (Director of Campus Ministry, St. Joseph's College); Dr. Daniel Sheridan (VPAA/Prof. of Theology, St. Joseph's College); and Mrs. Laura McCown (Women Affirming Life).

The Study Circle's first meeting featured discussion of Nicholas J. Healy's essay "*Communio: A Theological Journey*"—an especially appropriate reading with which to introduce the purpose and direction of the gatherings. The second meeting of the Study Circle occurred in November, and featured a discussion of Adrian J. Walker's essay "'Sown Psychic, Raised Spiritual': The Lived Body as the Organ of Theology," based on an analysis prepared by Dr. Sheridan. The group looks forward to upcoming winter meetings in January 2007 and March, and the opportunity to explore the rich collection of essays featured in the recent volume's *Deus caritas est* Symposium.

The Study Circle meets approximately every six weeks. The meetings are held in the Faculty Lounge at St. Joseph's College, whose large windows offer participants the beautiful vista overlooking Sebago Lake and the White Mountains at sunset. Catholic theologians, philosophers, and laymen from a variety of professions join together with their Bishop in genuine affection, wonderful conversation, good food, lots of laughter, and continued commitment to the *communio* which the journal's founders envisioned.

Omaha, Nebraska

Omaha is the home of another new study circle—affectionately named, the "Cornhusker Study Circle"—at St. Thomas More Church. This lively small group meets every second Sunday of the month, with Fathers Ross Burkhalter, Ted Richling, and Val Peter. In 2006, the group met four times, discussing various articles from several *Communio* issues. In June, the members discussed David L. Schindler's article on "Truth, Freedom, and Relativism in Western Democracies: Pope Benedict XVI's Contributions to *Without Roots*" in the Winter 2005 issue. According to Fr. Burkhalter, the conversation "focused in particular on the 'creative minorities' and their role in the Church." The question was raised as to how these groups could remain faithful and "connected to the life of the Church," while still practicing their particular charism. The discussion also "revolved around the problem and challenge of relativism in our society and how these 'creative minorities' can be an effective response to relativism."

At subsequent meetings, the Nebraska Study Group discussed Nicholas J. Healy's "*Communio: A Theological Journey*" from the Spring 2006 issue; "Through Mary's Memory to Jesus' Mystery," by José Granados; and Jörg Splett's article from the Summer 2006 issue, "The Gift of Life—Why There Is No Right to Die." These articles generated many interesting questions, for example, what it

means to be oneself "in another," as the idea of *communio* expresses. Does the journal help to bridge cultural divisions with theology?

Related to Mary, the group pondered what it meant to prophesy as "mother": "The seed of prophecy, received and kept in the womb of memory, is called to bring forth fruit." Fr. Burkhalter noted that one sees "memory's origins in Mary at the Annunciation and given new enlightenment and strength with the Resurrection." At the group's final, year-end meeting, the members considered the notion of "conviction" to which many groups attest. Many who oppose the Church's stance on end of life issues have conviction but lack reasonableness. The group came to the conclusion that the Church must act both with conviction *and* reasonableness when it states its positions and carries them out. These reasons must be articulated in addition to relying on authoritative pronouncements. If life is willed by Another, then it follows that life itself is good and not only good *for* something.

Jersey City, New Jersey

The New Jersey *Communio* Study Circle continues to meet quarterly in Jersey City to discuss articles in the current issue of *Communio*, says Matt Laracy. "Conversation is lively and the new friendships are heartening," among about 6 to 12 current members and with new members always welcome. The group typically meets on a Sunday, beginning with a light lunch and followed by "heavy discourse." Among the articles the group discussed was David L. Schindler's "The Dramatic Nature of Life: Liberal Societies and the Foundations of Human Dignity," from the Summer 2006 issue. The group planned to open the new year with a meeting on January 28th, focusing on Pope Benedict's encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, and incorporating some of the commentaries related to the Pope's encyclical, as well.

Waterloo, Ontario

The Waterloo *Communio* Circle met monthly during 2006 for lively discussions of articles selected from the journal, Peter Erb announces. In May and October they held their regular Spring and Autumn Saturday Seminars. The first, entitled "Learning From the Mass," featured a paper by Dr. Vivian Ligo of St. Augustine's Seminary, Toronto, which was later published as *Reflections on the Liturgy*, the fourth in the group's Occasional Papers on Catholic Life and Thought. Peter reports that in November the theme was "Icons: Theology in Colour," offered by Fr. Myroslaw Tataryn, Academic Dean and Acting President of St. Jerome's University, Waterloo. Christina E. A. Marshall's, *Liturgy as the Contemplation of Transfiguration in the Works of Romano Guardini*, Occasional Papers on Catholic Life and Thought was also published this year.

The group opened 2007 with a January evening discussion:

“Can Christians Think?” The event will feature Norman Klassen, co-author with Jens Zimmerman of the book, *The Passionate Intellect: Incarnational Humanism and the Future of University Education*. The regular January 28th Thomistic Toast and Turkey Roast this year will feature a seminar on Thomas’ Commentary on Colossians.

Memphis, Tennessee

Glenna Bradshaw announces that, for now, the Memphis group is focusing its readings and discussions on the writings of Pope Benedict. They have been reading *Deus caritas est*, the Holy Father’s opening talk to bishops at the start of the synod in October 2005, as well as several shorter teachings. Until the group expands to include priests or other scholars to help lead discussion on other writings, the group members will keep their focus on the Pope’s works.

The group consists of about 10-12 adult members, who have been meeting together since November 2005. At each gathering, they pray and discuss the readings assigned the previous meeting.

Denton, Texas

The Study Circle in northern Texas has continued to meet regularly, according to Rose Marie Chisholm. In addition to these regular sessions, the group held a special “two-session day” in May 2006. The members came together at the Mt. Carmel Center for the day for a morning and afternoon session with a communal lunch. The group discussed two articles from *Communio*, Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Deus caritas est*, and an essay on the encyclical published in the St. Austin Review.

For the second session, Mr. Steve Matuszak read a paper entitled, “Person, Encounter, Communion: The Legacy and Vision of Pope John Paul the Great,” which he had presented at the “Philosophical Legacy of Karol Wojta” conference in Hartford, Connecticut on March 22, 2006.

Martinsburg, West Virginia

Don Patthoff, the study circle coordinator for the Martinsburg group, shares with *Communio* readers the death of a very close friend this past year: Tony Atkinson. He was part of the Martinsburg Study Group from its very beginning and even through his long illness. Don wrote and offered a eulogy for Tony at his funeral on December 7, 2006, a man in whom Don saw the true *communio* spirit alive and radiating to the world. “Tony’s very presence was the heart of what values were all about. Tony was true. . . Tony is true. He was a true believer. No, he was more than a true believer. Believers can truly believe in false things, but what Tony believes in is True. He had a long relationship with Jesus Christ, Mary, the angels, and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist that few adults

can maintain. No matter the tragedies and suffering, I never once heard him complain. When Tony prayed he was on a plane that was often different than where the rest of us were.

“He never stopped amazing me. Tony and I spent many hours in cars going to meetings and talking about what we were reading. He was a good listener. Not a passive, a very active one. He didn’t like to talk in public, however, and somehow he always got me to do the presentations. He was from a large devoted Catholic family and two of his older brothers were pilots in WWII; they were killed in action. Tony wanted to fly like his brothers, but he was rejected from the program. He also wanted to be a brother but was told just a week before his vows that his vocation lay elsewhere.

“We feel joy when our children are born, but this moment is something different than the joy of first birth. Instead we feel the sense of true Glory. May we all, with Tony’s prayers, rest in Christ’s peace.”

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Chris Carr reports that the study group at Marquette has been somewhat dormant but hopes that the *Communio* circle can be revived in the coming months. The group is continuing its search for a faculty sponsor and meeting location.

Zouk Mikayel, Lebanon

On October 26, 2006, Edward Alam’s *Communio* group in Lebanon held its first meeting of the present academic year, “bringing together Muslims and Christians from all over the world” in dialogue over Pope Benedict XVI’s lecture at Regensburg. In December, the group continued to discuss the Pope’s lecture. Dr. Alam opened the two-day conference with a presentation that focused on four fundamental issues: (1) the dialogue of cultures, (2) the philosophy of Rationalism, (3) the history of theology, and (4) the task of the university. “Dr. Alam implied that the paragraph in the Pope’s speech which had aroused controversy was more or less incidental to the main theme of the Pope’s lecture: the complementary relation between faith and reason.” The audience included many Muslim professors from around the world, who also participated in the discussion. Dr. Habib Malik from the Lebanese American University said that there were “two useless extremes” in Christian-Muslim dialogue: “on the one hand a simple pointing to elements in common (belief in God, decent morals, etc.) and avoiding the real problems, with smiles and handshakes all round; and on the other hand thinking that by force of argument one could impose conversion, something that must be left to Almighty God.” Dr. Malik also emphasized that “while the present Pope attached great importance to inter-faith dialogue, his greatest concern was the de-christianization and re-christianization of Europe.”

The Lebanon *Communio* group has gone through a change over the past three years, namely, its recognition by the “Metanexus Institute on Religion and Science” in Philadelphia. The Circle applied for funding from this Institute and has received \$25,000 over the past three years. They have used the funds to purchase texts and hold seminars, among other things. Presently, there are two groups that meet on a regular basis, says Edward Alam: (1) *Communio*: wherein the members focus on the writings of von Balthasar in a setting that is devotional and somewhat “private.” This group consists mostly of Catholic members. And (2) *Communio/Metanexus*: wherein the members “focus on issues that relate to the intersection of religion and science, mostly the natural sciences, but not exclusively.” This latter group’s meetings are open to the public and are more “academic” in nature. Notre Dame University has recently devoted an entire issue of its journal to the activities of this latter group. Dr. Alam is the chairman of both groups, and the editor of this special issue.

Cambridge, United Kingdom

The Cambridge *Communio* Circle meets once a term at Blackfriars Cambridge, with dinner at 7 p.m. and discussion following at 8. A member of the Circle opens the discussion with a short summary of the article that has been chosen. Discussions are lively, Christine Fletcher reports. Membership includes about 12 to 18 people from Cambridge University, the Margaret Beaufort Theological Institute (which is part of the Cambridge Theological Federation), and from the surrounding parishes.

Chris also announces that the “Circle was delighted to celebrate” the appointment of Fr. Aidan Nichols to the John Paul II Visiting Lectureship in Roman Catholic Theology on April 2006. Fr. Aidan Nichols is the Circle’s co-founder and co-chairman, who lives in Cambridge and commutes to Oxford.

The program for the 2006 calendar year included discussions of the following articles:

In February 2006, Chris Fletcher presented Joseph Ratzinger’s article, “Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology,” from the Fall 1990 issue of *Communio*. In June, Fr. Nicholas Kearney took on the task of presenting Javier Prades’ “The Tribe or the Global Village?” from the Summer 2001 issue. In November, Gisbert Greshake’s, “The Spiritual Charism of Nazareth” from the Spring 2004 issue was introduced to the group by Sr. Pauline Burling.

If anyone would like more information about the Cambridge Circle, he or she may e-mail Dr. Chris Fletcher at chrisf_stives@yahoo.com.

THE CHESTERTON INSTITUTE FOR FAITH & CULTURE

Stratford and Leonie Caldecott, editors of the journal *Second Spring* (www.secondspring.co.uk), have joined up with the artist and iconographer David Clayton to start an independent company for education and publishing. Called *ResSource*, the company is inspired by *ressourcement* theology and aims to apply the ideas of Balthasar and others to lifelong education. Details regarding this new initiative can be found on the website, www.ressource.co.uk, including art classes, conferences, and summer schools. The “Brave New World” summer school on Shakespeare and the Renaissance is taught by Clare Asquith, the author of *Shadowplay*, and by Edoardo Rialti of Communion and Liberation, from the University of Florence.

A ten-day retreat at Easter called “Cosmic Liturgy” is intended to help prepare the ground spiritually for the “reform of the reform.” It is inspired by Pope Benedict’s book, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, on Romano Guardini’s book of the same name (presented by Dr. Connie Lasher, director of the new John Paul II Center for Theology and Environmental Studies at St. Joseph’s College in Maine), and on the mystagogy of Maximus the Confessor (presented by Dr. Adrian Walker). David Fagerberg of Notre Dame will also be one of the presenters. Full details regarding the retreat and other courses can also be found on the *ResSource* website: www.ressource.co.uk. Anyone who is interested may write for leaflets. Stratford Caldecott and David Clayton will be in the Washington area in mid-May 2007 for a conference of the Washington Arts Group and can be reached through www.ressource.co.uk.

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 at communio-icr.com.

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

Winter 2005: Faith and Reason

Spring 2006: The Wedding at Cana

Summer 2006: *Deus caritas est*: A Symposium

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