



ANNUAL REPORT

2024





Where higher learning meets faithful service.

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Cover Photo: Statue of Our Lady in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart by Barbara Johnston



Our Mission

The McGrath Institute for Church Life bridges the Catholic intellectual life and the life of the Church in order to form and empower faithful Catholic leaders for service to the Church and thereby the world. In collaboration with our ecclesial partners, we propose and enact a renewed vision of Church life through scholarship, pastoral expertise, and teaching to discern and address the needs of the Church.

Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

This report serves as a reflection of our Institute's continued commitment to serve as a living institutional witness to Christ and His message. The year 2024 was marked by strategic and exponential growth for our Institute, an expansion of our global reach, and an increase in our capacity and impact.

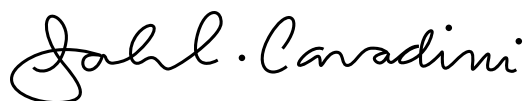
This was also the year our Church in the United States celebrated the National Eucharistic Revival and Pilgrimage, which culminated at the National Eucharistic Congress in nearby Indianapolis. Our own Carolyn Pirtle bestowed on us the gift of *Behold God's Love: A Eucharistic Musical*, which she composed with reverence and admiration in service to the National Eucharistic Revival. As an Institute, we were proud to offer our own reflections and resources in service to this national revival, including lectures featuring our faculty and staff, several *Conversations That Matter* discussions, and a 6-part lecture series *The Only Solution is Love: The Eucharist and Catholic Social Teaching* in conjunction with the Institute for Social Concerns and the Department of Theology.

We were also proud to offer our expertise through larger-scale events throughout the year, including a convening of bishops from dioceses across the nation and world at the conference *The Place of Episcopal Discernment in the Synodal Journey*, and a gathering of Catholic media influencers from across the globe in the fall. We celebrated these accomplishments, and welcomed the onset of new initiatives, while our existing programs continued to flourish in strength and impact.

The year concluded with joyful recognition of our efforts from Lilly Endowment Inc. We welcomed a \$10 million grant to fund our new Pathways to Communion Program, which aims to strengthen the ecosystem of theologically informed service opportunities for young Catholics in the United States.

In this report, you will find a snapshot of our efforts in 2024. Nothing that we do could have been accomplished without your continued generous support. On behalf of the staff and faculty of the McGrath Institute and on behalf of the thousands of people who have benefitted from our programming, a resounding "Thank you!"

With Continuing Gratitude,



John C. Cavadini, Ph.D.

McGrath-Cavadini Director

McGrath Institute for Church Life



Our History

For nearly half a century, the dedicated faculty and staff of the McGrath Institute for Church Life have partnered with Catholic dioceses, parishes, and schools to address contemporary pastoral challenges with theological depth and rigor.

As a collaborative partner with clerical and lay Catholic leaders at all levels, we provide theological tools and spiritual formation directed towards confronting today's most pressing challenges with urgency and impact.

We are proud to serve as a preeminent source of creative Catholic programming for evangelization and formation, sparking the Catholic imagination and encouraging the Body of Christ throughout the United States.

Forming Lay Leaders for Service to the Church

ECHO GRADUATE SERVICE PROGRAM

In 2024, the Echo program welcomed 29 students to further study, formation, and service to the Church through Echo and its partner dioceses. These students emerged from an impressive applicant pool representing 46 undergraduate institutions and four foreign countries. Moreover, six members of the class of Echo 21 have been designated “Echo Holy Cross Fellows.” This fellowship extends additional professional development opportunities to several incoming students with particular interest and talent in an important or emerging area of ministry.



In addition, last summer, the Echo team celebrated its 20th anniversary with a celebration on the Notre Dame campus. More than 80 Echo graduates and their families attended the festivities, which featured meals, workshops, Mass, and a South Bend Cubs game.

ECHO

In the Spring of 2024, the Echo staff welcomed Diana Salgado Huicochea as its new Associate Director. Diana earned her M.A. in Theology and served as a parish apprentice in the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana as a member of the class of Echo 17.



LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/echo

Shaping the Next Generation of Pro-Life Leaders

NOTRE DAME OFFICE OF LIFE AND HUMAN DIGNITY



The Notre Dame Office of Life and Human Dignity (LHD) team welcomed 85 teachers and ministers to develop a deeper understanding of human dignity in the Catholic intellectual tradition at the *2024 Teaching Human Dignity Symposium*. During the Symposium, participants also spent significant time in workshops and group discussions as they began the difficult work of integration into the classroom, school, or ministry. In June, the team also welcomed Language Arts and Theology teachers from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend for the *Literature & Catholic Imagination Workshop*. This workshop provided teachers with the opportunity to discuss the intersection of religion and literature and develop strategies to engage the transformative power of literature in their curriculum for language arts.

LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/lifeandhumandignity



WEBINAR DISCUSSION

Conversations That Matter

In light of the National Eucharistic Congress, which took place in summer of 2024, the spring *Conversations That Matter* series focused on the fruits of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist—the concrete practices of love—especially in light of our commitment to the poor. Coinciding with the national presidential election, the fall discussion, “Reimagining Politics in the Light of the Eucharist,” explored the Church’s call to participate in political life and the complexities, challenges, and possibilities therein.

LHD’s *Rosary for Life*, co-sponsored by the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, Campus Ministry, University Faculty for Life, and Notre Dame’s Right to Life Club, was an opportunity to gather at the Grotto and pray for a greater love and respect for each human person from conception to natural death.



Catholic Civil Dialogue Initiative for Schools

“We have forgotten that we belong to each other”
– Mother Teresa



The Catholic Civil Dialogue Initiative for Schools was developed as a unique opportunity for Catholic schools to create cultures of human dignity through the practice of dialogue. Informed by the light of faith, the principles of “a true spirit of dialogue” have the potential to develop understanding, cultivate belonging, and enliven hope. Through this initiative, educators learn the principles of civil dialogue and collaborate to incorporate elements of dialogue into their classrooms and schools in ways that strengthen a sense of belonging—belonging in the Church, belonging to each other, and belonging to God.

Diving Deeper into the Faith

STEP ONLINE THEOLOGY

More than 1,500 individuals took part in more than 3,700 STEP online theology registrations throughout 2024. STEP offered 159 courses led by Notre Dame theology professors and other theologians aimed at catechists, school teachers, lay ministers, deacons, and other adult Catholics who seek distance learning that is intellectually-rigorous and faithful to the Catholic tradition.

STEP for Catholic School Professionals launched in the summer of 2024. This new iteration of STEP offers a unique opportunity for quality, practical education that is uniquely suited to the needs of busy teachers, administrators, and other staff members. Small cohorts are supported by expert facilitators with a flexible schedule suited to the busy summer months. Some of the topics addressed in the courses include integrating the faith with curriculum and instruction, teaching religion for learning and encounter, and educating on human sexuality.



The Notre Dame Center for Liturgy and STEP for Catholic School Professionals offered a six-week summer virtual conference titled *The Eucharist and Catholic Schools*. Timothy P. O'Malley and Clare Kilbane hosted both recorded and live sessions with 16 speakers addressing various aspects of the Eucharist and Catholic schools. Each week included opportunities to reflect, read classic texts related to the theme of the Eucharist, watch interviews with theologians, educators, and pastoral leaders, and eventually practice what they learned. Janet Effron facilitated the online discussion and learning activities. This education also featured content from McGrath Institute faculty and staff, such as Carolyn Pirtle, Sr. Damien Marie Savino, Leonard DeLorenzo, Michael Baxter, and Christopher Baglow.

LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/step

CAMINO SPANISH ONLINE THEOLOGY

More than 400 students in dozens of parishes and other groups across the United States and the global Church in Latin America explored the riches of their Catholic faith and strengthened their commitment to serve



their communities through Camino courses. In 2024, the Camino team held their first in-person course with the Diocese of Paterson in New Jersey. A Camino facilitator who works in this diocese welcomed a group from Saint Margaret for this initial cohort.

LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/camino

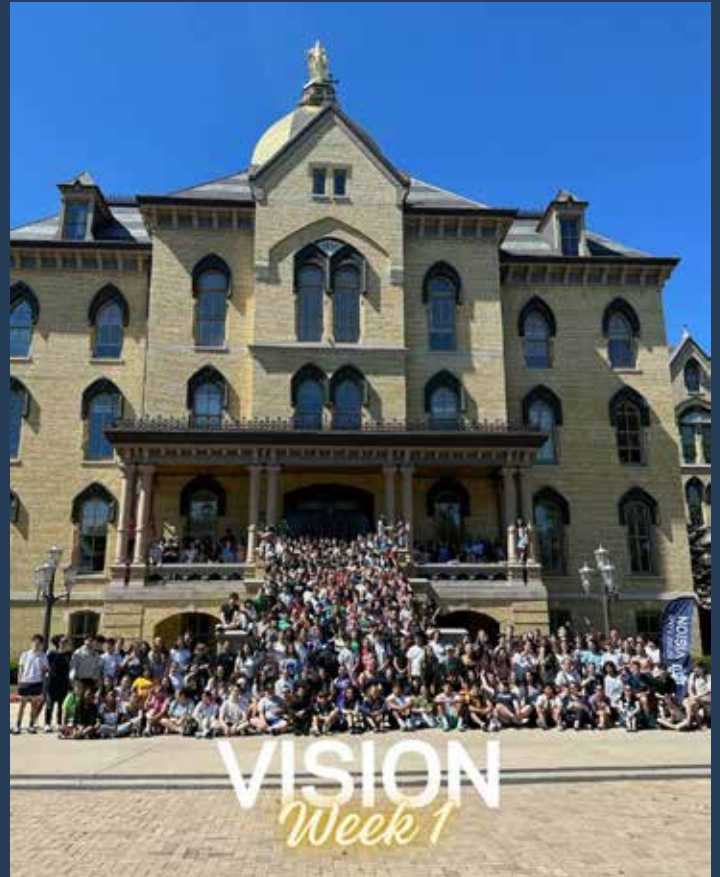
A Summer Conference to Explore Your Story

NOTRE DAME VISION

The Notre Dame Vision team welcomed Julia King as the new Associate Director of the program. Alongside the staff, Julia accompanies the Vision Mentors and facilitates a space for high school students to encounter Christ in the midst of community and live into their baptismal call to holiness.

Participation in the 2024 summer sessions for high schoolers and campus and youth ministers marked a significant increase from the two previous years, with 516 students and 59 campus and youth ministers taking part. Over 100 undergraduate students applied and 50 were invited to be Vision Mentors for Summer 2025, their largest number in the past few years.

In 2024, campus and youth ministers from 13 states participated in Vision for Campus and Youth Ministers. By attending one of the two week-long conferences, participants from high schools and parishes strengthened their commitment to ministering to young people in the Church, networked with Church leaders from across the country, and explored the dynamics of God's call through prayer, theological study, and personal reflection.



THIN VEIL COHORT

The Thin Veil cohort, an initiative through Notre Dame Vision that supports Holy Cross campus and youth, began in summer 2024. A group of eight from Indiana, Texas, and Maryland gathered to pray together and share information about their ministry. Bishop William A. Wack, C.S.C., Bishop of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee served as guest presenter. The cohorts are focused on exploring the Holy Cross charisms and include individual coaching, retreats, and theology sessions with Notre Dame faculty.



SCIENCE & RELIGION INITIATIVE

The Science & Religion Initiative (SRI) enjoyed another busy year, which began with the co-sponsorship, along with the College of Science, of the *Organs and Origins* teaching conference. The inaugural session *What is an Organ?* convened leading experts across the disciplines to explore how interdisciplinary dialogue between biology, engineering, philosophy and theology might frame and strengthen the latest insights into the nature of life. In the second conference of the series, *In the Beginning: Life, the Universe, and Everything*, scientists, philosophers, and theologians considered initial causes and asked questions, such as “What can modern science tell us about beginnings?” and “In the dialogue between disciplines, what might philosophy and theology contribute?”



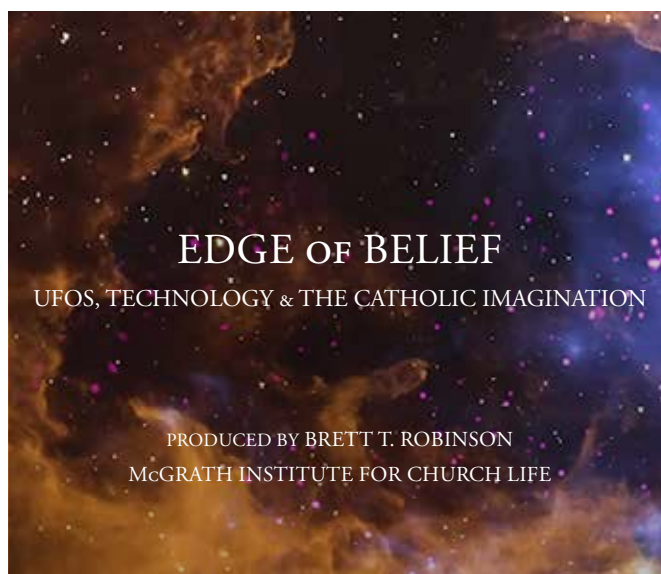
Another project, the 2024 St. Albert Initiative, took place in New Orleans, Louisiana, for Catholic high school students, teachers, and parents. It featured talks by Catholic scientists and the opportunity to meet, eat with, and ask questions of Catholic scientists in many fields. This initiative, named after St. Albert the Great, bishop, scientist, philosopher, theologian, teacher, and patron saint of natural science and scientists, is sponsored by SRI and the Society of Catholic Scientists, with generous grant funding from the John Templeton Foundation.

The Science & Religion Initiative, by training educators through its four Faith and Reason Days in New Orleans, Louisiana, and O'Fallon, Seton Hall, and Morristown, New Jersey, and its Foundations Seminar in New Orleans, helped hundreds of teachers across the nation deepen their understanding of the complementarity between faith and science.

In honor of the Feast Day of St. Hildegard von Bingen, the Society of Catholic Scientists Chapter at Notre Dame hosted its second annual Faith and Science Week, co-sponsored by the College of Science and SRI. Activities celebrated the harmony that exists between science and faith as two different paths to grow in knowledge of the truth.

The SRI team, along with McGrath Institute Director for Outreach Brett Robinson, took part in a documentary film discussing the UFO phenomenon

and similar mysteries of the cosmos from a Catholic perspective. The film features leading thinkers in science and the humanities who share their views on the phenomenon and how they approach the topic as Christian believers.

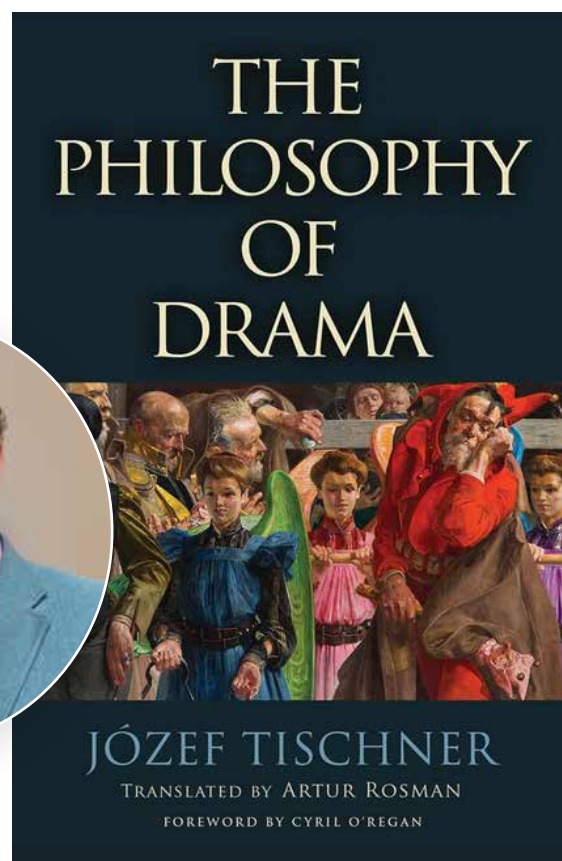


A Digital Journal of Theology, Philosophy, and Culture

CHURCH LIFE JOURNAL

Church Life Journal experienced significant growth in 2024, nearing 3 million individual annual hits, which is 500,000 more than the previous year. Its most frequent contributor, Cyril O'Regan, recently received a Ratzinger Prize from the Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation.

Church Life Journal Editor-in-Chief and Associate Research Professor, Artur Rosman, Ph.D., was appointed by the Tischner Institute to translate *The Philosophy of Drama*, by Jozef Tischner. *The Philosophy of Drama* is considered Tischner's most influential work and remains one of the most important works of Polish philosophy.



LINK: churchlifejournal.nd.edu

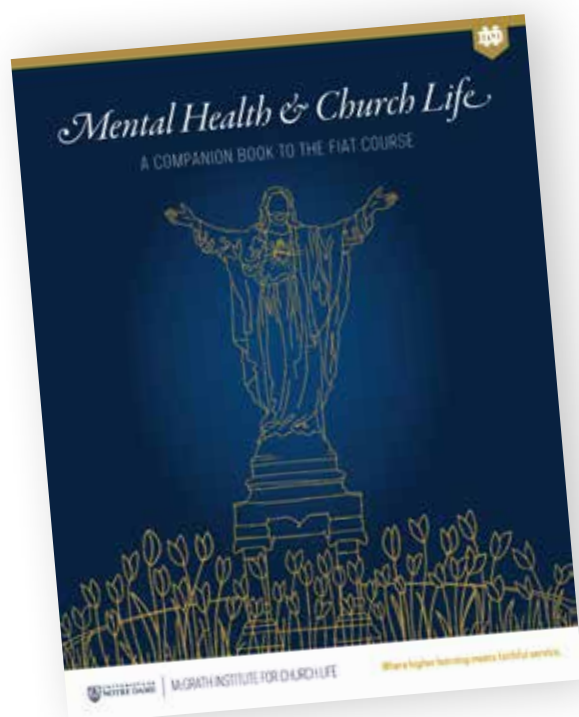
Responding to Today's Mental Health Crisis

FIAT PROGRAM ON FAITH AND MENTAL HEALTH

Following its mission to strengthen parish communities of belonging and hope through increased support for persons and families living with mental illness, the Fiat Program on Faith and Mental Health offers formation for dioceses across the United States.

In its third year, the Fiat Program, led by Beth Hlabse, directed 105 men and women in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and 85 men and women in the Diocese of Green Bay through the completion of the 10-week "Fiat Course on Mental Health and Church Life."

In September, Beth Hlabse and Mary O'Callaghan led a retreat for more than 60 men and women from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. In addition, Beth Hlabse offered the keynote for a Mental Wellness Conference sponsored by the Pro-Life Ministry at Holy Family Parish in Artesia, CA. The conference launched their mental health ministry, which is led by five parishioners who are alumni of the Fiat Course.



Since its inception in 2022, the Fiat Program has partnered with seven dioceses to offer its formation for 235 men and women serving across the country. Leaders trained by the Fiat Program serve in 200+ parishes across the United States. Ninety-five percent of these leaders have initiated new or strengthened existing ministries to support those with mental illness. Following involvement in this program, participants demonstrate a decrease in stigma and loneliness and an increase in parish belonging, reported hope, and a positive impact on their spiritual life.

LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/fiat

NOTRE DAME CENTER *for* LITURGY

It was an exciting year of growth for the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy. Through programming that integrates theological insight, liturgical experience, and pastoral wisdom, the Center for Liturgy strives to support leaders in the Church by educating and forming both lay and ordained leaders, including parish and diocesan ministers, teachers, and parents, for the task of liturgical evangelization.

Building Eucharistic Cultures and Forming Leaders

EUCHARISTIC CULTURE PROJECT



Launched in 2022, the Eucharistic Culture Project is an initiative of the Mathis Liturgical Leadership Program, forming leaders to orient the Church's preaching, teaching, prayer, and service around the Eucharistic mystery.

In January 2024, the cohort of the Eucharistic Culture Project traveled to San Antonio to explore the relationship between the Church and the city through the development of the missions and construction of the Cathedral of San Fernando and its plaza.

Later, in July 2024, the cohort gathered on Notre Dame's campus, where they offered capstone presentations on their final projects, many of which will be made available for ecclesial leaders.

Catholic Preaching in an Age of Disaffiliation

SAVORING THE MYSTERY

In this cohort-based initiative that is a part of the Mathis Liturgical Leadership Program, priests and deacons are paired with lay ministers from a variety of diocesan ministries and apostolates to study preaching in the Christian tradition and create and implement projects focused on the renewal of preaching the Christian faith within their own ministerial contexts.

Members of the 2023-25 Savoring the Mystery cohort traveled to Kraków, Poland, for a nine-day immersion trip on the subject of preaching and culture. Participants met with scholars, religious, priests, and laity to discuss the history of Polish preaching, not only in the liturgy, but also through art, poetry, film, and architecture.



Childhood and the Liturgical Imagination

CONTOURS OF WONDER



Supported by a generous grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., Contours of Wonder: Childhood and the Liturgical Imagination is a three-year research and pastoral initiative that fosters a renewal in liturgical formation. Inspired by Catholic theologian, Fr. Romano Guardini, regarded as one of the most important Catholic intellectuals of the twentieth century, Contours aims to attend to the complexities of childhood today while accompanying children into a posture of worshipful wonder.

In April 2024, the team welcomed scholars from various institutions of higher education to Notre Dame's campus where they presented essays exploring a theology of childhood. These essays will be collected and published as an edited volume.

The Contours of Wonder team began its outreach to dioceses across the nation. These one-day workshops invited catechists, religious educators, ministers, teachers, and diocesan leaders to explore the new challenges of forming children in worshipful wonder. Workshops took place in Nashville, Tennessee, Dallas, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia.



LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/liturgy

THRIVING IN MINISTRY INITIATIVE

Guiding Hispanic Families Toward a Faithful Catholic Life

HOLY FAMILY INITIATIVE FOR FAMILY CATECHESIS

The Holy Family Initiative for Family Catechesis welcomed Benito Medrano in 2024, who, along with other members of the McGrath team, presents dioceses and parishes new methods of affiliation to overcome the existing divisions between immigrant parents and growing numbers of first- and second-generation Hispanic individuals born in the United States.

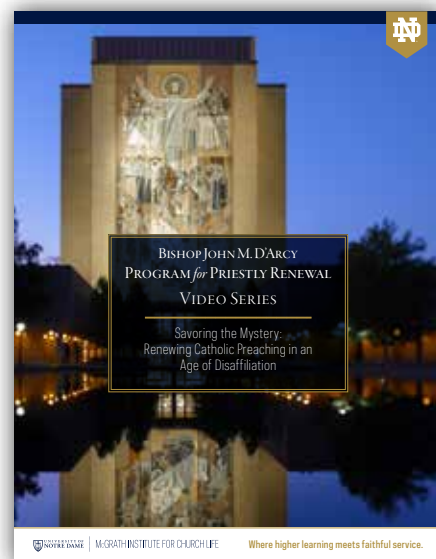


Spiritual Renewal for Diocesan Priests

THE BISHOP JOHN M. D'ARCY PROGRAM IN PRIESTLY RENEWAL

The Bishop John M. D'Arcy Program in Priestly Renewal is an experience of intellectual and spiritual renewal for diocesan priests across the United States.

The 2024 video series addressed the question, "How do we create a culture of preaching in our parishes, schools, and apostolates that fosters deeper affiliation in the Church?" The goal of this series was to nurture the religious lives of individuals and families and foster the growth and vitality of Christian congregations by helping Christian pastors strengthen their abilities to proclaim the Gospel in more engaging ways.



Guiding the Next Generation of Catholic Leaders

STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR CATHOLIC LEADERS

The 15 members of the cohort for Strong Foundations for Catholic Leaders continued their learning journey throughout 2024, receiving professional and pastoral development, financial and career planning, and personal and relational support. These leaders have already completed formal training for ministry in the Church and are still in the first eight years of their ministry.

Bringing the Eucharistic Revival Culture to Life

EUCCHARISTIC REVIVAL

Katherine Angulo, along with Timothy P. O'Malley, were invited by Bishop Andrew Cozzens to serve on the executive committee for the three-year Eucharistic Revival hosted by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

As part of this role, she was able to travel to at least one diocese per state across the U.S. Her travels included visits to 37 different Arch/dioceses witnessing firsthand where the Church truly is and bringing back insights to help the MICL develop strategies to support the Church in the U.S. and globally.



Angulo was also chosen as one of the eight official delegates of the USCCB to attend the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress in Quito, Ecuador. The delegation was joined by 85 other Americans, including bishops, priests, and lay people from across the nation, along with bishops from 53 countries around the world, who gathered in fellowship to pray and learn under the theme of "Fraternity to Heal the World."

Empowering Young Leaders

YOUNG ADULT INNOVATION HUB

Young Hispanic leaders gathered for the second annual Iskali Leadership Conference in the summer of 2024. This conference was organized by the Young Adult Innovation Hub, a collaboration between the McGrath Institute and Iskali, a Chicago-based organization that provides high-quality faith formation for young Latinos. Highlights included lectio divina, adoration, networking, and panel discussions.



LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/thrivinginministry

Young Adults Handing on the Faith to Future Generations

CATECHIST ACADEMY



The Catechist Academy welcomed Brittany Tull as Program Coordinator in 2024. She joins McGrath from St. Pius X Catholic Church in Granger, where she was the Director of Youth Ministry and later a Faith Formation Associate. Prior to her previous position at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Granger, Indiana, Brittany served in a parish in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, where she was originally placed as a member of the class of Echo 11. In her current role, she helps form students from Notre Dame, Holy Cross, and Saint Mary's into catechists who will hand on the faith to future generations by teaching religious education in South Bend and Mishawaka parishes.

In 2024, 49 students volunteered to lead groups in many forms of catechesis at eight local churches—including inside the traditional classroom, youth ministry, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, special needs catechesis, and family catechesis.

This past year, the Catechist Academy began two new initiatives:

- **Monthly Formation Nights** – Once a month the Catechist Academy hosts an optional formation meeting to provide additional Catechetical and vocational formation for the students within the Catechist Academy, utilizing the resources and staff of the McGrath Institute to lead these nights.
- **Guerin Fellows** – This past spring a new fellowship was developed. The fellows will be responsible for recruitment of new students, planning and leading the monthly formation nights, and supporting their fellow catechists who work alongside them in their parish placements.

LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/catechist

Addressing Disaffiliation with Notre Dame Students

TAKE A SECOND LOOK

The Take a Second Look program continues to grow in popularity among students and professors across Notre Dame's campus. Initially developed by Joshua McManaway of the McGrath Institute, Fr. Kevin Grove, C.S.C., and Anthony Pagliarini of Notre Dame's Department of Theology, the program is intended to persuasively engage and encourage students to "take a second look" at the beauty and profundity of the Catholic faith that they thought they had left behind, outgrown, or had never considered relevant to their lives in the first place.

In an age of disaffiliation, the goal is to accompany Notre Dame students through this time of questioning and growth to a deeper understanding that will help them live out their faith over a lifetime. With more professors joining the program each semester, Take a Second Look is now reaching close to 1,000 students a year.

LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/news/encouraging-students-to-take-a-second-look

A Game-day Tradition

SATURDAYS WITH THE SAINTS



Saturdays with the Saints has established itself as a popular Notre Dame football pregame ritual that combines the University's rich traditions of Catholic faith with spirited game days. Notre Dame theology faculty and McGrath Institute staff deliver dynamic lectures on saints chosen for their uncommon virtue and their willingness to let their faith stand in contradiction to the wisdom of the world.

The 2024 season of Saturdays with the Saints drew unprecedented crowds of over 300 people per lecture comprised of both visitors to campus and students—causing lectures to be standing-room-only and even requiring the opening of two overflow rooms. The six-lecture season, themed “Saints and Their Miracles,” included presentations by McGrath faculty members Abigail Favale and Timothy P. O'Malley.

LINK: mcgrath.nd.edu/saints

Conversations with Scholars and Leaders

CHURCH LIFE TODAY PODCAST

In 2024, *Church Life Today* ranked in the top 25% of Buzzsprout podcasts, reaching 77 countries. As its host, Leonard DeLorenzo released more than 20 new episodes in 2024, including two episodes dedicated to a deep engagement with the late Pope Francis's encyclical, *Dilexit Nos*. The podcast reached over 17,000 downloads, with the most popular episode being *What are you doing here? Pontius Pilate in the Creed*, with Josh McManaway, which is already the sixth most-downloaded episode for the podcast. Other popular episodes included: *C.S. Lewis's 'The Great Divorce': a discussion with Josh McManaway*; *Living Authentically Catholic in a Divided America*, with Ken Craycraft; *From Possessiveness to Gratitude*, with Tania Geist; and *What Young Adults Are Seeking in Faith and Life*, with Jeff Keuss.



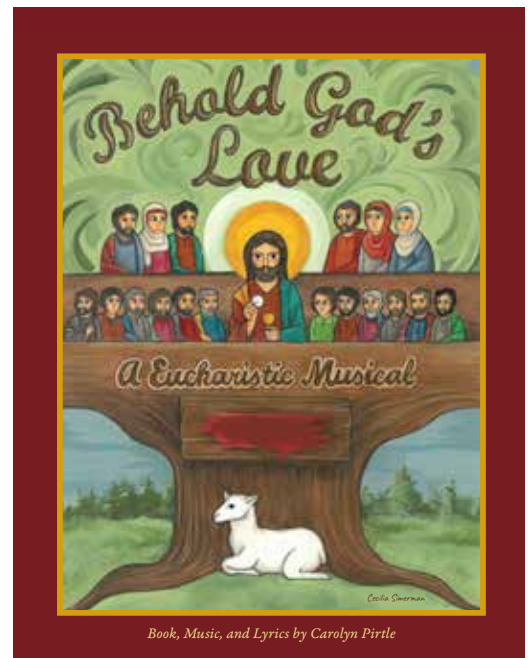
2024 HIGHLIGHTS

BEHOLD GOD'S LOVE: A EUCHARISTIC MUSICAL

In summer 2024, the McGrath Institute announced the world premiere of *Behold God's Love: A Eucharistic Musical*, a three-act work written to inspire a deeper love of the Eucharist in service to the National Eucharistic Revival.

Composed by Carolyn Pirtle, M.M., MSM, M.A., program director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy, *Behold God's Love* invites audiences to encounter the beauty of the Eucharist through imaginative portrayals of stories from Scripture.

With cast and crew from across the tri-campus community and numerous parishes throughout the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, this intergenerational production represents a true cross section of the South Bend region. A total of approximately 1,800 guests attended the two performances of the musical, which took place at O'Laughlin Auditorium at Saint Mary's College.

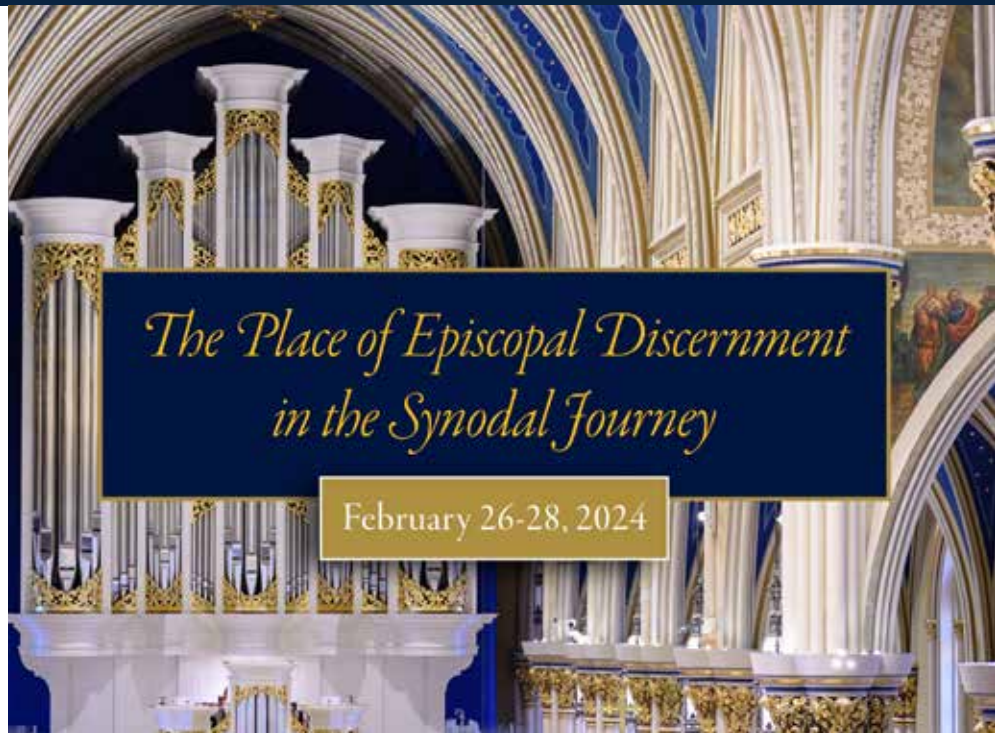


THE PLACE OF EPISCOPAL DISCERNMENT IN THE SYNODAL JOURNEY

In support of the Institute’s mission to bridge the rich resources of our University and the Church, the McGrath Institute and United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine co-hosted *The Place of Episcopal Discernment in the Synodal Journey* on Notre Dame’s campus.

This conference, attended by more than 60 bishops and cardinals and other Church leaders from across the United States, served as another step along the synodal journey, which began at the first session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops last October in Rome, and culminated in October 2024.

The conference provided an exploration of some of the most important topics for discernment that have been mentioned during the Synod so far. It included a presentation titled *The Role of a Synodal Bishop*, which was delivered by Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops, as well as a response by Bishop Kevin Rhoades, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.



THE INKLINGS PROJECT

The Inklings Fellows Project encourages the discussion of meaningful themes through courses that promote the works of the Inklings, particularly C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. Fellows receive a grant of \$1,500 to create and teach these courses.

The Inklings Project team selected 13 faculty to serve as Inklings Project Fellows for the 2024-25 academic year. Drawn from 13 different colleges and universities, including four international institutions (India, France, Scotland, and Ukraine), these Fellows represent the fields of English, History, Catholic Studies, Public Relations, Theology, Mathematics, Chemistry, and the Humanities.



CATHOLIC MEDIA INFLUENCERS SUMMIT

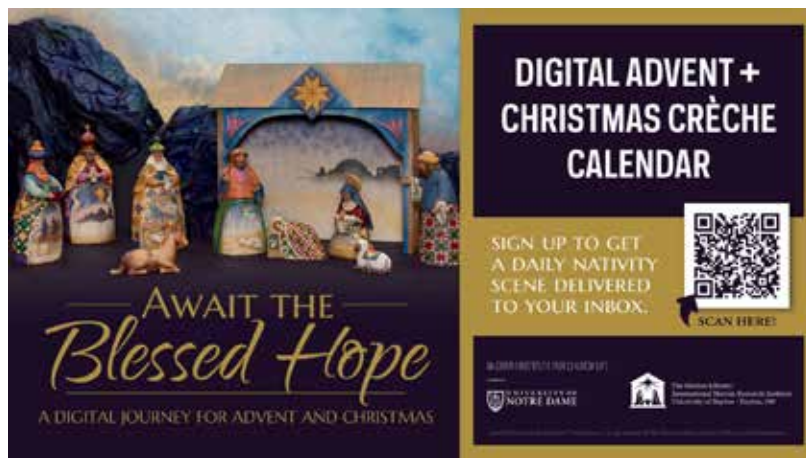
The McGrath Institute received a generous grant from Porticus to support the development of a Catholic Media Influencer Summit, which was led by the McGrath Institute's Associate Director for Outreach Brett Robinson, and took place at Mundelein Seminary in November. The summit gathered leading voices in Catholic media to discuss the challenges of communicating for and about the Church while collecting vital information about the values and practices these influencers are bringing to the digital space.



The summit was aimed at addressing some of the issues set forth in the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops synthesis report *A Synodal Church in Mission*, which states: "There is an urgent need to consider how the Christian community can support families in ensuring that the online space is not only safe but also spiritually life-giving." Over four days, participants heard from expert presenters from a variety of fields and engaged with questions surrounding the risks and rewards of digital ministry. Notable speakers included Msgr. Lucio Ruiz, Vatican Dicastery for Communication; Alessandro DiSanto, Co-Founder of Hallow; and Sr. Theresa Aletheia Noble, Sisters of the Little Way. Earlier in 2024, in preparation for the summit, the McGrath Institute sponsored a Spanish-language webinar for Catholic media influencers.

DIGITAL ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS CRÈCHE CALENDAR

From the first Sunday in Advent through the Baptism of our Lord, more than 1,000 people received a daily devotional email. The message contained a beautiful image of a crèche, or Nativity scene, from around the world and was accompanied by a reflective description and brief prayer. More than 23,000 emails were opened in total. This initiative began in 2014, when the McGrath Institute began partnering with the Marian Library at the University of Dayton to bring an exhibit of crèches from around the world to Notre Dame's campus.



PATHWAYS TO COMMUNION

The University of Notre Dame received a \$10 million grant from Lilly Endowment to fund Pathways to Communion at the McGrath Institute. This program aims to strengthen the ecosystem of theologically informed service opportunities for young Catholics in the United States.

Notre Dame is one of 12 organizations funded through Lilly Endowment's National Youth and Young Adult Initiative on Faith & Service, which is designed to nurture and deepen the faith of Christian young people through intentional service and reflection about the meaning of service in their lives. This funding will enable the Institute to develop a support hub for 10 partner organizations that provide youth service opportunities and to conduct national research designed to generate insights about young people's experiences.

Katherine Angulo will lead *Pathways to Communion*. Michael Baxter, Mary O'Callaghan, and Clare Kilbane will serve as Faculty Advisers. Research will be implemented by Timothy P. O'Malley and Laura Upenieks, a sociologist from Baylor University.



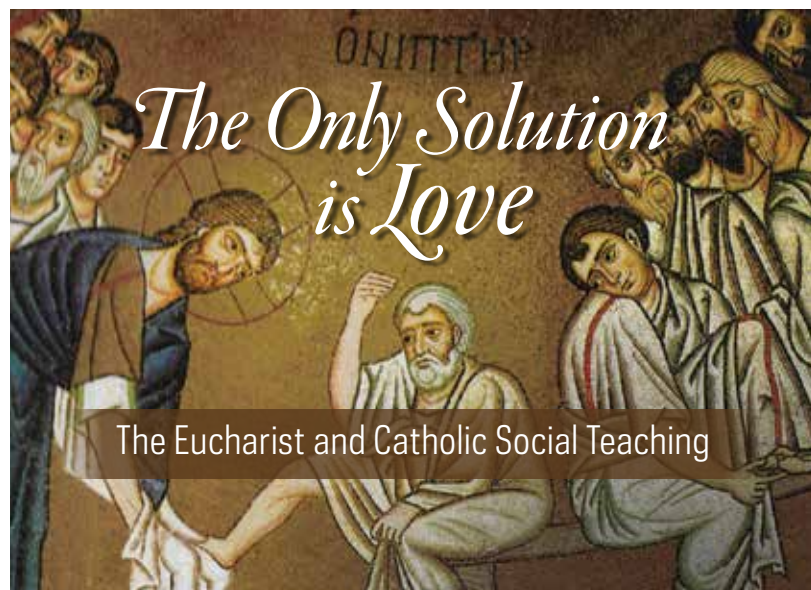
ADVANCING THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE CHURCH

The McGrath Institute for Church Life and the National Catholic Partnership on Disability offered six online educational seminars for Church leadership in relation to a pastoral statement on persons with disabilities developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth.

Convening a cross-disciplinary group, including persons with disabilities, theologians, clergy, lay people, and experts in the field of disability, the webinar series, which was titled *In Communion: Advancing the Full Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Church*, explored foundational and aspirational concepts important to the pastoral statement and enhancing the involvement of persons with disabilities in the Church. The seminars also addressed the role of the Church in advocating for persons with disabilities in society.

McGRATH INSTITUTE FACULTY SELECTED FOR GRANT FUNDING BY DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

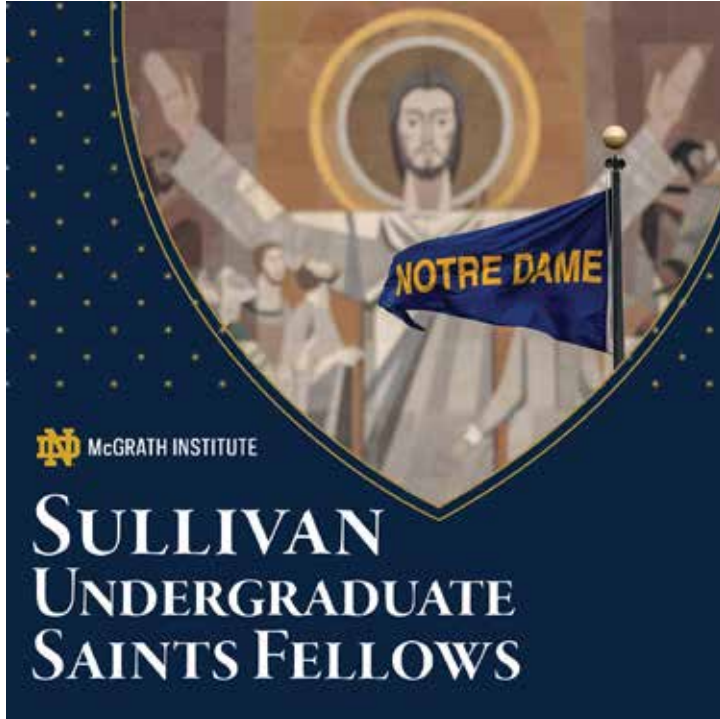
In 2024, the McGrath Institute celebrated Clare Kilbane, whose educational proposal was selected for funding by Notre Dame's Democracy Initiative. Prof. Kilbane's project will involve the Life and Human Dignity team, Jessica Keating and Christina Leblang, as well as partners Kati Macaluso, Monica Kowalski, and Kevin Baxter from the Institute for Educational Initiatives. The grant of \$50,000 will support three years of activities exploring how Catholic schools prepare Christian citizens.



THE ONLY SOLUTION IS LOVE: THE EUCHARIST AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

In Spring 2024, Michael Baxter developed a lecture series focusing on the link between the Eucharist and Catholic social teaching to explain how the pursuit of justice is the fruit of Eucharistic action in overcoming indifference to and alleviating the suffering of the poor

and marginalized. The six-part series, sponsored by the McGrath Institute, the Center for Social Concerns, and the Department of Theology, contributed to the National Eucharistic Revival. The lectures examined how "the Eucharist commits us to the poor" from various perspectives and explored the truth articulated by Dorothy Day at the end of *The Long Loneliness*—that in the face of injustice and violence, "the only solution is love."



SULLIVAN UNDERGRADUATE SAINTS FELLOWSHIP

Arising from the Sullivan Family Saints Initiative in 2024, the Sullivan Undergraduate Saints Fellowship forms Notre Dame undergraduate students as leaders in the study and spirituality of the saints. Twelve Fellows were chosen through a selective application and interview process according to their leadership potential, research interests, and desire for spiritual growth. The program includes a fully-funded pilgrimage to France, a 1.0 theology credit, and a \$500 stipend.

Each Fellowship cohort will make an international pilgrimage, along with Leonard DeLorenzo and a chaplain. The aim of the pilgrimage is to become

immersed in the cultures that gave rise to particular saints—cultures which these saints, in turn, renewed and enriched. The ultimate aim is for fellows to become leaders of other undergraduate students in praying and serving with the saints.

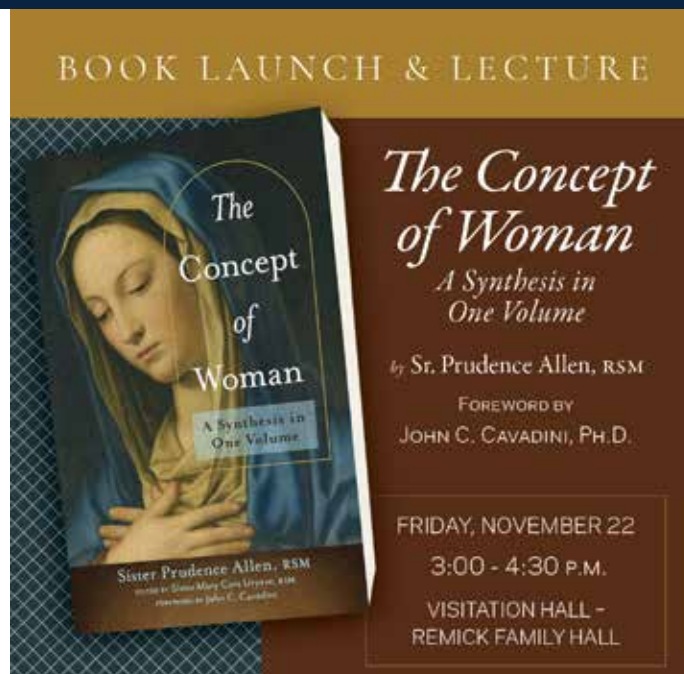
ROADMAP TO REALITY: CARLO ACUTIS AND OUR DIGITAL AGE

In 2024, the McGrath Institute and the National Eucharistic Congress Inc. announced their partnership with Castletown Media on the documentary *Roadmap to Reality: Carlo Acutis and our Digital Age*. The film, which features interviews with Brett Robinson, John Cavadini, and Timothy P. O'Malley, explores the life of Carlo Acutis and the lessons he offers young people regarding the challenges of the digital world.



SR. PRUDENCE ALLEN BOOK LAUNCH

Sr. Prudence Allen, RSM, offered a special book launch and lecture on *The Concept of Woman: A Synthesis in One Volume* in November of 2024 at Remick Family Hall. Topics of discussion included the development of a philosophically coherent concept of woman from the pre-Socratics to the 20th-century personalists. Brief presentations were given by Sr. Ann Astell of the theology department, as well as John Cavadini and Abigail Favale, of the McGrath Institute with a response by Sr. Prudence Allen.



WELCOMING NEW FACULTY

Melissa Moschella joined the McGrath Institute as a Professor of the Practice in 2024 from her previous position at Catholic University of America. Dr. Moschella is a philosopher whose work spans the fields of ethics, political philosophy, and law. She has been a frequent collaborator with the Notre Dame Office of Life and Human Dignity and the Science & Religion Initiative, and she presented *Respecting Human Dignity at the End of Life: The Assisted Suicide Debate* at Notre Dame in March. She continues to contribute to the mission of the Institute through her research, writing, teaching, and public speaking on a variety of contemporary topics, such as religious freedom, reproductive technologies, life issues, and issues related to marriage and family.



LUNCH COLLOQUIUM WITH CARLOS EIRE

In tandem with his presentation as part of the 2024 Saturdays with the Saints lecture series, Carlos Eire, T.L. Riggs Professor of History and Religious Studies at Yale University, discussed his book, *They Flew: A History of the Impossible*. The response was given by Nic Teh, Department of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame.

McGrath Institute for Church Life

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Thanks to Our Benefactors

As we continue to navigate the evolving realities confronting our world and our Church, we thank our benefactors, whose steadfast commitment and generosity of spirit continue to inspire our work in forming faithful Catholic leaders.

We are especially grateful to our Advisory Council, whose time, talent, and expertise enrich and guide our programming. In addition, we thank the John Templeton Foundation for its support of our Science & Religion Initiative and Lilly Endowment Inc. for its support of our Church Communications Ecology Program, Thriving in Ministry Initiative, and Notre Dame Center for Liturgy programming.

The McGrath Institute for Church Life
partners with Catholic dioceses, parishes, and
schools to address pastoral challenges with
theological depth and rigor. By connecting
the Catholic intellectual life to the life of the
Church, we form faithful Catholic leaders for
service to the Church and the world.

