



## From the Director

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We suddenly find ourselves in the middle of March and in the heyday of our semester. Three events to celebrate—one coming tomorrow night (our much-anticipated Teilhard Lecture with visiting Teilhard Fellow, Dr. Bronwen McShea) and two that took place last week—our fourth annual ***The Way Forward***

Conference (hosted by the Hank Center, The Center on Religion and Culture at Fordham, the Boisi Center at Boston College, and the Center for Catholic Studies at Sacred Heart University,) and our ninth annual ***Climate Change Conference*** convened and led by Loyola University Chicago's School of Environmental Sustainability.

This year's ***The Way Forward*** meeting, ***Fratelli tutti: Cultivating the Politics of Communion and Compassion***—as always with this important grant-supported ecclesial gathering—brought together a select group of Cardinals, other Bishops, scholars, public-facing Catholics, philanthropists, and journalists to focus on this year's topics: Pope Francis' encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti* and its specific themes of social friendship, civic health, and the possibility of a "better kind of politics." All of these conferences have been most successful and constructive; but this meeting was perhaps the most fruitful yet. I will share out further once I have had time to contemplate and reflect. We also had a chance to wish Pope Francis a happy twelfth anniversary of his pontificate in this fun, heartfelt **[video produced by America Media](#)**. A most consequential gathering indeed—and we continue to pray to God that Papa Francisco continues his recovery and healing.

Loyola's School of Environmental Sustainability's ninth annual Climate Change Conference was another profound success. This year's focus was "**[Shifting Waters: Water Security and the Emerging Water Crisis](#)**," a deeply textured issue that requires astute, interdisciplinary

—as we have since its inception. We hosted an excellent panel focused on celebrating Pope Francis' game-changing encyclical, *Laudato si'*, on its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This was special for us since the Hank Center led the first symposium on *Laudato si'* in the U.S.—a day-long [interdisciplinary symposium here at Loyola](#) in early September 2015. Read more about our Blue Ribbon Panel below—and about the concert that followed the reception. We also celebrated the tireless, expert work of Dean Nancy Tuchman and her brilliant career of climate leadership and caring for our common home. Huzzah, Nancy!

Finally, and closest to home: please join us tomorrow night for our annual Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. Lecture. This year we are most pleased to welcome historian Bronwen McShea. Her lecture is titled “**Is Catholicism's 'Woman Problem' a History Problem?**” and it is one you won't want to miss. Read more about it below and we hope to see you.

A blessed Feast of St. Joseph to all, and,

Warmest regards,

Dr. Michael P. Murphy

## Hank Center Highlights

### Spring 2025 Events Calendar

**HANK CENTER FOR THE CATHOLIC INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE** **SPRING EVENTS 2025**

**JANUARY**

- JOURNALS OF SOCIETY SERIES: A Lecture Series on Migration through the Lens of Catholic Social Teaching and Jesuit Education**  
Lectures by Elizabeth Spitzer and Margaret A. Douglas of Loyola's Spiritual DNA!  
January 14th (Registration Required)
- ENVISIONING A LIVABLE FUTURE**  
The Pope's latest encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, is a powerful call to action for the world's future.  
January 21st (Registration Required)
- LAUDATO SI' 10 SERIES**  
Envisioning a Livable Future  
An online 10-part series exploring the Pope's vision of a sustainable future for all.  
January 28th (Registration Required)
- THE WOMEN OF THE CHURCH**  
A new book by Bronwen McShea, exploring the lives of women in the Church.  
January 28th (Registration Required)

**FEBRUARY**

- LAUDATO SI' 10 SERIES**  
Envisioning a Livable Future  
An online 10-part series exploring the Pope's vision of a sustainable future for all.  
February 4th (Registration Required)
- LAUDATO SI' 10 SERIES**  
Envisioning a Livable Future  
An online 10-part series exploring the Pope's vision of a sustainable future for all.  
February 11th (Registration Required)
- LAUDATO SI' 10 SERIES**  
Envisioning a Livable Future  
An online 10-part series exploring the Pope's vision of a sustainable future for all.  
February 18th (Registration Required)

**MARCH**

- LAUDATO SI' 10 SERIES**  
Envisioning a Livable Future  
An online 10-part series exploring the Pope's vision of a sustainable future for all.  
March 4th (Registration Required)
- LAUDATO SI' 10 SERIES**  
Envisioning a Livable Future  
An online 10-part series exploring the Pope's vision of a sustainable future for all.  
March 11th (Registration Required)
- LAUDATO SI' 10 SERIES**  
Envisioning a Livable Future  
An online 10-part series exploring the Pope's vision of a sustainable future for all.  
March 18th (Registration Required)

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.HANKCENTER.EDU](#)

**LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO**

We hope to see you at our upcoming events!

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS! 10th Anniversary of the Papal Encyclical, *Laudato Si'* Virtual Series

**Laudato si' at 10 Series**

Envisioning a Livable Future  
Shifting Waters: Water Security and the Emerging Water Crisis

**HANK CENTER**

## UPCOMING EVENT! 2025 Annual Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. Lecture presented by: Dr. Bronwen McShea



*Is Catholicism's 'Woman Problem' a History Problem?*

**Thursday, March 20th, 2025, 7-8:30 PM  
Information Commons 4th Floor, LSC**

The Hank Center is proud to be involved in a number of events commemorating the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*:

**VIRTUAL SERIES:  
Envisioning a Livable  
Future  
(Zoom Only,  
Registration  
Required)**

**January 29, February  
17, March 11, April 9,  
2025**

An online, 7-part serial symposium in collaboration with John Carroll University, marking the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*.

Videos are now available for the first two sessions. You can watch these by clicking the links below.

**Topics Include:**

**[January 29: The Current State of Climate Change.](#)**

What's happening? Are we too late? Can we bend the curve even now? What has changed since 2015? Furthermore, what needs to be done, by when, and how to do it?

**[February 17: The Contribution of Catholic Social](#)**

*Thought*, Ten years after the publication of *Laudato Si'*, what are, or ought to be, the growing edges of Catholic social thought? What does it have to contribute to

The Hank Center is honored to welcome the Spring, 2025 Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. Fellow in Catholic Studies, Dr. Bronwen McShea, to offer this year's Teilhard lecture, titled, "Is Catholicism's 'Woman Problem' a History Problem?"

Sixty years after Vatican II, eyebrows still go up when women assume leadership positions in the Catholic Church. Yet forms of female leadership were integral to Catholicism's development long before modern times. McShea links Catholicism's often perceived "woman problem" to chronic forgetfulness about this within the Church and urges more mature engagement with history per se in Catholic intellectual life.

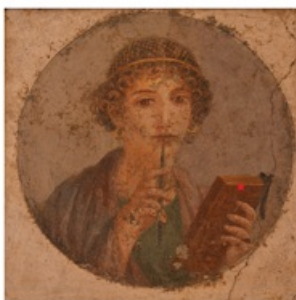
**Bronwen McShea** is a historian and the author of *Women of the Church: What Every Catholic Should Know* (2024), *La Duchesse: The Life of Marie de Vignerot, Cardinal Richelieu's Forgotten Heiress Who Shaped the Fate of France* (2023), and *Apostles of Empire: The Jesuits and New France* (2019). Her writings have also appeared in many academic journals and popular forums including *The Wall Street Journal* and *First Things*. With a Ph.D. in History from Yale University and M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School, she has held research and teaching posts at Princeton University, Columbia University, the University of Nebraska Omaha, and the Leibniz Institute of European History in Germany, among other institutions.

***This event is free, open to the public, and all are welcome to join!***

**Event Information**

**UPCOMING EVENT!**

**The Pleasures of Pseudepigraphy Conference**



***The Pleasures of  
Pseudepigraphy:***

Authorship and Imagination in  
Ancient Epistolary Fictions

**March 30-31, 2025**

Information Commons, 4th Floor,  
Lake Shore Campus

**March 30-31, 2025**

**Lakeshore Campus, Information Commons, 4th Floor**

**Conference Preview By:  
Julian Sieber, Graduate  
Research Assistant for the  
Hank Center**

For those I haven't met around the Hank Center or at our various events, my name is Julian Sieber, the Graduate Research Assistant at the Hank

our understanding of the climate crisis and the development of an ecological conscience?

**March 11:** *The Political Economy of Climate Change*, How do we move from what Pope Francis has called an “economy that kills” both people and planet to an economy that is truly sustainable and just? What are the levers of such a system change, and what are the obstacles to it?

**April 9:** *Environmental Politics*, How do we move from what Pope Francis has called an “economy that kills” both people and planet to an economy that is truly sustainable and just? What are the levers of such a system change, and what are the obstacles to it?

Register for  
Envisioning a  
Livable Future  
Sessions

**Journeys of Dignity:  
Recap and Videos**



The Hank Center was proud to cosponsor Journeys of Dignity: A Lecture series on Migration through the Lens of Catholic Social Teaching and Jesuit Education.

[Session One,  
January 15, 2025,  
"Education and  
Migration: A Double  
Helix of Loyola's](#)

Center. I'm a Theology PhD student at Loyola with specialization in New Testament and Early Christianity and I'm beginning to write my dissertation on concepts of land and discourses of indigeneity in the Acts of the Apostles and Second Temple Judaism.



As a student of biblical scholarship, I'm very much looking forward to the upcoming conference co-sponsored by the Hank Center and the Departments of Theology and Classical Studies, *The Pleasures of Pseudepigraphy: Authorship and Imagination in Ancient Epistolary Fictions*.

Derived from the ancient Greek words for false (*pseudo-*) and writing (an *epigraphē* is some kind of written inscription), pseudepigraphy at the broadest level is something written in another's name. Today, as we tend to presume concepts such as authorship and copyright, we might be inclined to dismiss this practice as 'forgery.' Yet there is much evidence that the phenomenon was widespread across the Mediterranean and Ancient Near Eastern contexts from which the biblical texts emerged, and that there were a variety of ways of thinking of the practice. And you may be surprised by the number of familiar biblical texts engaging in pseudepigraphy.

What are the implications of pseudepigraphy for our relationship with biblical texts, and is it possible that beyond mere 'forgery,' these practices could reveal something more expansive and creative about living tradition and the theological imagination?

To explore these questions, join us at the *Pleasures of Pseudepigraphy* conference. The final session of the conference in particular will offer reflections and discussions on pseudepigraphy, Tradition, and Scripture for Jewish and Christian readers of Scripture today.

***This event is sponsored by the Hank Center, the Loyola University Chicago Department of Theology and Department of Classics.***

More Information and Conference Schedule

**UPCOMING EVENT!**  
**Annual Cardinal Bernardin Common Cause Lecture  
featuring Bishop Mark Seitz**

### Spiritual DNA":

presented by Michael Canaris, PhD of the Institute of Pastoral Studies and Aleja Sastoque Luna, MA of Campus Ministry

(Photo above by Vatican Media)

### **EVENT RECAP Newman's Cause as Doctor of the Church with Ken Parker**



The Hank Center was pleased to welcome Ken Parker, one of the promoters for Newman's cause for Doctor of the Church, to Loyola for a luncheon and presentation.

Dr. Parker is the Ryan Endowed Chair for Newman Studies, Chair of the Department of Catholic Studies, and Professor of Catholic Studies and Historical Theology at Duquesne University.

In the video below you can hear Dr. Parker speak about St. John Henry Newman in an interview he did with EWTN prior to Newman's canonization.

**More about St.  
John Henry  
Newman**

**SPOTLIGHT:  
Nexus:  
Conversations on the**



### *Images and Likenesses: Immigration, Dignity, and the Soul of America*

**Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 7 - 8:30 PM  
Lakeshore Campus, Coffey Hall, McCormick Lounge**

The Hank Center is honored to welcome Most Rev. Mark J. Seitz, Bishop of El Paso and Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration, to deliver the annual Cardinal Bernardin Common Cause Lecture.

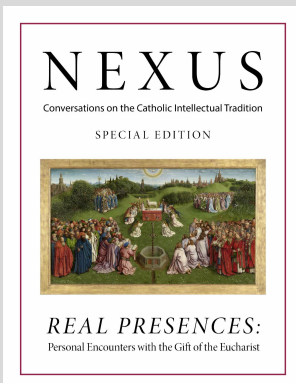
In the midst of the contentious public dialog around immigration, Catholics find themselves at an important theological and moral crossroads. This is especially true in light of Pope Francis' recent letter calling for all Catholics to reject narratives that discriminate and dehumanize.

In addition to being an episcopal leader on the duty to care for immigrants, Bishop Seitz has served migrant families and refugees face-to-face in El Paso with compassion, solidarity, and love. In this way, Bishop Seitz's ministry models the gospel obligation to welcome the stranger with openness--a calling that is not only for a 'border bishop' like himself, but for all who seek to realize a true borderless church whose mission is to go out to the margins.

***This event is free, open to the public, and all are welcome to join!***

**Event Information**

**SPECIAL EDITION  
Real Presences:  
Personal Encounters  
with the Gift of the  
Eucharist**



"The sacramental imagination is an integral feature of Catholic life; and both the possibilities and reach of Holy Communion—of the Eucharist, which the Second Vatican Council rightly characterizes as “source and summit” of Christian life—is as variegated as each person. As Catholics, we are not all called to be cookie-cutter replicas of each other; but we are called to live in communion. And we are called to be saints."

Excerpt from  
Introduction by Dr.  
Michael P. Murphy

**Read Real  
Presences**

**Lenten Playlist 2025**

**EVENT RECAP!**

**Special Panel Discussion and Reception:  
*Laudato Si'* @10: Pope Francis and Caring for Our  
Common Home Today**

**Saturday, March 15th, 4:30 - 7:00 PM CT  
McCormick Lounge, Coffey Hall, LSC**

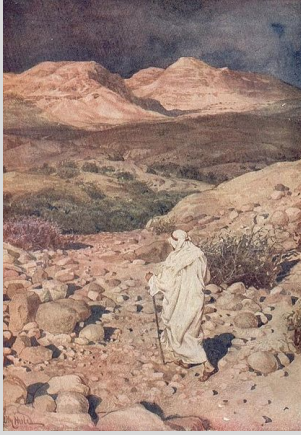


Loyola University Chicago was the first U.S. university to respond to Pope Francis' encyclical in 2015--and we were proud to host a special panel this year: *Laudato Si'* @10: Pope Francis and Caring for Our Common Home Today, featuring Christiana Zenner (Fordham University), Thomas Hibbs (Baylor University), Chanelle Robinson (College of the Holy Cross), and Br. Mark Mackey, S.J. (Loyola University). This event included a hosted post-panel reception and is one of the free sessions offered during the **School of Environmental Sustainability's annual Climate Change Conference**. There was a concert that followed the reception, an original composition by Loyola's Dongryul Lee, *Missa Laudato Si'*-- and a community celebration of the work of Dean Nancy Tuchman and her brilliant career of climate leadership and caring for our common home. **Video coming soon.**

***Laudato Si'* Panel Event Information**

**EVENT RECAP:**

**2025 Annual St. John Henry Newman Lecture  
presented by  
Dr. Abigail Favale**



Art by William Hole, (Public Domain)

In this season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, we hope you will enjoy our staff curated playlist. May it enrich your Lenten experience!

[Listen to the Lenten Playlist!](#)



### *'Make me what thou wilt': On Conversion and Surrender*

**Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 7-8:30 PM CT  
Information Commons 4th Floor, LSC**

The **St. John Henry Newman Lecture** is named after the great 19th century English prelate who wrote movingly about his intellectual journey toward Roman Catholicism in his spiritual autobiography, *Apologia pro vita sua* (1864). Newman's work helped later generations of Catholics and converts map out ways to understand the datum of religious faith in light of the contemporary issues facing modern life. Honoring this engagement with the Catholic tradition, CCIH invites scholars each spring to recount their own discovery (or rediscovery) of the Catholic intellectual heritage in light of their ongoing scholarship.

This year's lecturer was **Dr. Abigail Favale of the McGrath Center at the University of Notre Dame**. Dr. Favale shared her conversion story, a thoroughly 21st century experience that includes the discovery of the startling beauty of a sacramental cosmos and a vision of reality that upended her notions of gender, sexuality, identity, and authority. She describes in her recovery of an ancient faith that "There are events in life that leave you changed forever, right down to the very roots and heart of your being, because they go 'into the deep.'"



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**Spotlight: Hank Center Summer Graduate Student Fellowship**

**Meet our Fellows!**

***LaRyssa Herrington***



LaRyssa Herrington is a 4th year doctoral candidate in Systematic Theology and Liturgical Studies at the University of Notre Dame from Tolono, Illinois. She holds bachelor's degrees in psychology and social work from Greenville University (formerly Greenville College) and is a graduate of Emory University's Candler School of Theology where she completed her Master of Divinity concentrating in Catholic Studies. Her areas of research include the role of Mary in devotional and popular piety, womanist theology, liberation and political theologies, ritual studies, and sacramental theology. She is the author and co-author of several peer-reviewed articles and a book chapter, and her popular writings can be found in U.S. Catholic Magazine and the National Catholic Reporter.

***Jean-Paul Juge***



Jean-Paul Juge is a Ph.D. candidate in Historical Theology/History of Christianity at Boston College. He received both his B.A. in Philosophy (2019) and M.A. in Theology (2020) at the University of Dallas. His major area of research is early Christian theology, especially third and fourth-century Greek Christianity as well as the thought of Augustine of Hippo. His dissertation, with the working title "The Ecclesial Christology of Origen's Homilies on the Psalms," explores the relationship between Christ and the Church in the series of twenty-nine Greek homilies of Origen that were discovered in 2012. This project aims to bring renewed attention to Origen's ecclesiology, an aspect of his thought that is generally neglected, as well as to offer new insights into Origen's Christology, especially concerning the correlation between the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Church. Juge argues that, in these homilies, Origen depicts salvation as a kind of salvific exchange of properties between Christ and the Church according to the Pauline metaphor of Christ as the head of his ecclesial body. Additionally, Origen's Christology is here coordinated with a soteriology that stresses the union of individuals within the Church, which is the locus of deification. In this way, Juge offers a corrective to those views that give minimal significance to the Church in Origen's theology of salvation.

[See All of Our Fellows](#)

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## RECOMMENDED READING



In the spirit of cultivating the Catholic intellectual and artistic tradition, CCIH recommends new and notable books several times a year that integrate, interrogate, and celebrate Catholicism in dialogue with the world.

### [Women of the Church: What Every Catholic Should Know \(2024\)](#)

Author: Bronwen McShea, Publisher: Ignatius Press

While many Catholics are aware of great female saints such as Catherine of Siena and Thérèse of Lisieux, a view persists that, over the centuries, women played a limited role in the development of Catholic traditions and institutions. In this innovative survey of Church history, Current Teilhard Fellow Bronwen McShea demonstrates instead that faithful women have always been at the heart of the Church's common life, shaping it and the course of entire civilizations.

In *Women of the Church*, McShea presents a wide array of well known and lesser known canonized and beatified women, others awaiting beatification, and still more figures not meriting canonization but whom every Catholic should know. She situates Catholic women from diverse social, ethnic, and national origins in their historical contexts, examining specific challenges they faced in settings such as imperial Rome, Reformation Europe, colonial Latin America and Africa, and the USA and Soviet Union during the Cold War. In the process, she shows that, in every age, women inspired by God with creativity, courage, and fidelity have helped save the Church from corruption, disunity, and destruction.

In short, McShea clarifies that the history of Catholic women is the history of the Church—as much as the history of Catholic men is.

### [Bridging the Sacred and the Secular](#) (1994)

Editor: J. Leon Hooper, S.J., Publisher: Georgetown University Press

John Courtney Murray, SJ (1904-1967), is most renowned for his ethical writings, which distinguish between the secular and the sacred, and for his defense of civil religious freedom based on natural law philosophy. His later theological writings, however, in which he sought to reintegrate the temporal and the spiritual, civil society and the church, philosophy and theology, have been largely ignored. In this new collection of essays—previously scattered among various periodicals over the course of thirty years—J. Leon Hooper, S.J., presents a selection of Murray's theological writings that not only outlines and highlights the integrity of Murray's moves towards a public theological discourse but also contributes to the ongoing post-conciliar task of integrating the secular and the sacred, thereby invigorating American public conversation today.

In his editorial introductions, Hooper furthers Murray scholarship by identifying two distinct links between Murray's well known non-theological writings and the explicitly theological work that also spans his public life. Common to both areas are Murray's deepening appreciation of the historicity of all human knowing and the cognitional operations that the human person brings to both sacred and profane living.

By making available Murray's explicitly theological and Christian humanism writings, this collection further enriches American ethical, theological and philosophical debate.

### [Restorative Justice and Lived Religion: Transforming Mass Incarceration in Chicago](#)

(2024)

Author: Jason A. Springs, Publisher: NYU Press

In the U.S., “restorative justice” typically refers to small-scale measures that divert alleged

wrongdoers from a standard path through the criminal justice system by funneling them into alternative justice programs. These aim to repair harms caused to the victims, the wider community, and those who caused the harm. And yet, when deployed for diversionary purposes, restorative justice initiatives often fail to address the manifestations of structural and cultural violence that contaminate the US justice system itself—the criminalization of people and communities of color, racially biased and brutal policing, and the arbitrary treatment of poor people of all colors. Can restorative justice challenge and transform the systemic injustices inscribed in U.S. mass incarceration? This book argues that it can, and examines how. It makes the case that restorative justice’s transformative potential depends on developing its often implicit, yet sometimes controversial, moral and spiritual dynamics. It explores case studies of everyday neighborhood people and community-led initiatives across Chicago who are using restorative justice to constructively transform conflict to restore their city, and fashion practices of justice for themselves that critically engage and transform structures and cultures of violence, government policy, and policing. The book reveals an emerging Chicago-wide network of restorative justice community initiatives that both work alongside and, through points of strategic and resistant engagement, are challenging and transforming the justice processes, and culture of mass incarceration. The result is a model for transformational and sustainable social changes. It displays the distinctively holistic restorative justice approach that is necessary to shift entrenched dynamics of structural violence that fuel the prison-industrial complex across the United States.

### [Flannery O'Connor's Manhattan](#) (2024)

Author: Katheryn Krotzer Laborde, Publisher: Fordham University Press

Much is made of Flannery O'Connor's life on the Georgia dairy farm, Andalusia—a rural setting that clearly influenced her writing. But before she lived on that farm, before she showed signs of having lupus, before she became dependent on her mother and then succumbed to the disease at thirty-nine, O'Connor lived in the northeast. She stayed at the artists' colony Yaddo in 1948 and early 1949 and lived in Connecticut with good friends from fall of 1949 through all of 1950. But in between those experiences, and perhaps more importantly, O'Connor lived in Manhattan.

In her biographies, little is said of her time in Gotham; in some sources, this period gets no more than one sentence. But little is said because little has been known. In *Flannery O'Connor's Manhattan*, the author's goal is to explore New York City from O'Connor's point of view. To do this, the author consults not just letters (both unpublished and published) and biography, but five personal address books housed in Emory's Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library. The result is a book of interest to both the O'Connor fan and the O'Connor scholar, not to mention those interested in midcentury Manhattan.

*Flannery O'Connor's Manhattan* is part guide to the who-was-who and who-lived-where of New York from roughly 1948 to 1964, at least those as they mattered to O'Connor. It also acts as a window to the writer's experiences in the city, whether she was coming into town for a series of meetings or strolling down Broadway on her way to lunch. In the end, it is the combination of the who-she-knew and the what-she-did that formed O'Connor's personal view of what is arguably the most famous of American cities.

### [Christian Poetry in America Since 1940: An Anthology](#) (2022)

Editors: Micah Mattix and Sally Thomas, Publisher: Paraclete Press

Showcasing thirty-five American poets born in or after 1940, this anthology confirms that one of the most vibrant developments in contemporary verse has been a renewed engagement with the Christian faith. Across a full spectrum of Christian belief, including the struggle to believe at all, these poets bring the power of their art to bear on serious questions: how to understand the goodness of God in a fallen and tragic world, how to reconcile universal truths with the particularities of human experience, how to render familiar events of salvation history in new language that generates its own epiphanies. As Christian engagement assumes a multiplicity of modes and voices, so does contemporary poetry in America. This volume, then, selective yet representative, features the work of early-, mid-, and late-career poets, formalists, free-verse poets, and experimenters in prosody. This anthology bears witness to the poetic mind as it seeks that which is above.

### [The Dry Wood](#) (1947)

Author: Caryll Houselander, Publisher: The Catholic University of America Press

In the English-speaking world, the Catholic Literary Revival is typically associated with the work of G. K. Chesterton/Hilaire Belloc, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. But in fact the Revival's most numerous members were women. While some of these women remain well known—Muriel Spark, Antonia White, Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Day - many have been almost entirely forgotten. They include: Enid Dinnis, Anna Hanson Dorsey, Alice Thomas

Ellis, Eleanor Farjeon, Rumer Godden, Caroline Gordon, Clotilde Graves, Caryl Houselander, Sheila Kaye-Smith, Jane Lane, Marie Belloc Lowndes, Alice Meynell, Kathleen Raine, Pearl Mary Teresa Richards, Edith Sitwell, Gladys Bronwyn Stern, Josephine Ward, and Maisie Ward.

There are various reasons why each of these writers fell out of print: changes in the commercial publishing world after World War II, changes within the Church itself and in the English-speaking universities that redefined the literary canon in the last decades of the 20th century. Yet it remains puzzling that a body of writing so creative, so attuned to its historical moment, and so unique in its perspective on the human condition, should have fallen into obscurity for so long.

The Catholic Women Writers series brings together the English-language prose works of Catholic women from the 19th and 20th centuries; work that is of interest to a broad range of readers. Each volume is printed with an accessible but scholarly introduction by theologians and literary specialists.

The first volume in the series is Caryl Houselander's *The Dry Wood*. Houselander is known primarily for her spiritual writings but she also wrote one novel, set in a post-war London Docklands parish. There a motley group of lost souls are mourning the death of their saintly priest and hoping for the miraculous healing of a vulnerable child whose gentleness in the face of suffering brings conversion to them all in surprising and unexpected ways. *The Dry Wood* offers a vital contribution to the modern literary canon and a profound meditation on the purpose of human suffering.

### [Exegesis of Commonplaces](#) (1902)

Author: Léon Bloy, Publisher: Wiseblood Books

Leon Bloy's *Exégèse des Lieux Communs*—first published in 1902—appears here in English for the first time through Wiseblood Books. Among the novels, essays, biographies, and journals composed by Bloy, there is one work whose only appropriate classification was given directly in its title: *Exegesis of Commonplaces*—a peculiar foray into a genre normally reserved for theologians. And yet, as Albert Béguin notes in his sublime *Léon Bloy: A Study in Impatience*, Bloy's entire output may be seen as a labor of exegesis: "...it became Bloy's aim to make his mind as transparent as possible to the light of grace and to penetrate further and further into the mysteries hidden beneath the surface of history and the state of mankind."

In the present volume, this "light of grace" is refracted upon the infallibly trite and rigorously unexamined language of the bourgeoisie. Banalities such as "Business is business," "You can't have everything," "I'll believe it when I see it," "Money can't buy happiness," etc., are treated with the gravity of sacred incantation and provide the framework for Bloy's dissections. As a matter of structure, the *Exegesis* recalls Flaubert's *Dictionary of Received Ideas* or Bierce's *Devil's Dictionary*, but whereas the latter are largely satirical (and cynical) attacks on an emerging class of acquisitive conformists, Bloy's project excavates the spiritual content of what might otherwise be dismissed as mere vapidities. Though he despises the bourgeoisie for its greed and vanity, for its hypocrisies and cruelties, Bloy nevertheless recognizes that "the most inane representatives of the bourgeoisie are themselves fearsome prophets," and that, "in the form of Commonplaces, they continually and unwittingly advance truly impressive claims, the implications of which, to them, remain unknown." Those implications, the supernatural blood invigorating an otherwise superficial and often incoherent idiom, are Bloy's true subject, and it is the purpose of his *Exegesis* to distill their essence.

## Contact Us

Loyola University Chicago

[The Joan and Bill Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage](#)

Cuneo Hall, Room 421

1032 W. Sheridan Rd. Chicago, IL 60660 Ph: (773) 508-3820

Email: [HankCenter@luc.edu](mailto:HankCenter@luc.edu)

## About the Center

The Joan and Bill Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage exists to help faculty and

students recognize and research Roman Catholic thought and its link to all academic disciplines in the university. It also seeks to convey that thought to other audiences inside and outside Loyola University Chicago.



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