

University of California, Santa Barbara

Catholic Studies Newsletter

Department of Religious Studies

Spring 2016



Keeping you up to date on our graduate students, the Tipton Visiting Professor, and Catholic Studies lectures, conferences, and events here at UCSB.

Greetings from the Chair

Ann Taves, Cordano Professor of Catholic Studies

Dear Friends of Catholic Studies at UCSB,

We are pleased to bring you the sixth issue of our Catholic Studies Newsletter to update you on Catholic Studies related developments here at UCSB. In the pages that follow you can read about the visits of St. Joseph's University professor Katie Oxx, who lectured on filming Catholicism in Philadelphia, including the papal visit last fall, and Northwestern professor Robert Orsi, who lectured on his new book, *History and Presence*. We also provide reports on the Borderlands Conference, co-sponsored by Catholic Studies; the visit of Catholic philosopher Emmanuel Falque, the 2016 Tipton Distinguished Visiting Professor; as well as updates on faculty and student research. We are especially pleased to offer a new approach to our Student Spotlight – a tour of the earliest known Christian church – by Cordano Fellow Yevgeniv Runkevich.

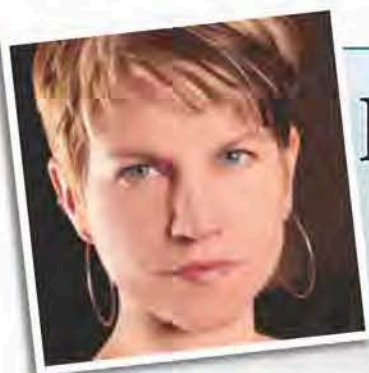
In another new development, we recently created a Catholic Studies Council – currently comprised of Marie Foley, Harriet Burke, and Magda Campo -- to assist with the public aspect of the Catholic Studies programming. As one of its first tasks, the Council developed a mission statement for public programming, which specifies that, “as a public university, we seek to sponsor community events related to Catholicism that are of general public interest and support activities that serve the common good.” We plan to offer at least one event each year with this aim in mind. Finally, special thanks to Shelby King, our newsletter editor.

Ann Taves

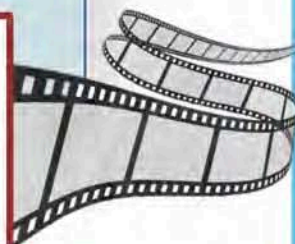
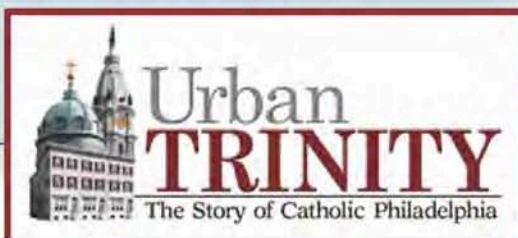
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Katie Oxx presents...



In September 2015, nearly 2 million visitors flooded the city of Philadelphia to join the locals awaiting the Papal visit. In anticipation, the Philadelphia Archdiocese commissioned History Making Productions to produce a 3-DVD set of Pope Francis' visit. They chose History Making Productions not simply because its founder Sam Katz was the Emmy award winning director of *Philadelphia: The Great Experiment* (2011) and, as a three time mayoral candidate, well known to most Philadelphians. Katz was on the Archdiocesan radar because he had just co-directed *Urban Trinity: The Story of Catholic Philadelphia*, which was showcased as a special event during the World Meeting of Families and premiering on ABC in conjunction with the papal visit.

When Ann Taves learned of these developments, she invited Katie Oxx -- her former student at Claremont Graduate University, the Field Producer for the DVD of the papal visit, and Co-Producer and Senior Historical Advisor for *Urban Trinity* -- to share her experiences filming historical and contemporary Catholic events. As Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and American Catholicism at Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, Oxx had long been immersed in the religious history of Philadelphia and served as a consultant on Katz's earlier production, *Philadelphia: The Great Experiment*. When Katz suggested that they co-produce a document on Catholic Philadelphia, she jumped at the chance. The result was a multi-sided documentary portraying the interaction between three sides of the "trinity" of people, church, and city through a series of gripping stories.

On October 19th Oxx spoke to students, faculty, and community members at Mosher Alumni Hall, using *Urban Trinity* as a way to illuminate the "Challenges and Opportunities of Transmedia Storytelling for Religion Scholars and Historians." Oxx discussed the risks and rewards for scholars of carefully crafting historical stories as a means of working across various presentation platforms -- text, film, and social media. As Oxx explained, this method fits well with those of scholars in

digital humanities, who are aware of the critical role that different forms of media—from television and the Web to social media more broadly—play in shaping our perspectives on key historical events. For the diverse audience members represented, Oxx successfully showed how "Transmedia Storytelling" can speak to numerous issues in historical methods, entertainment, and pedagogy.

The following evening, Oxx spoke at the Santa Barbara Mission Renewal Center on "Filming History: Catholic Philadelphia and the Papal Visit." Oxx gave us a sneak peek into the exciting, sometimes dramatic, and often rewarding world where religion and media meet. In addition to showing some clips from *Urban Trinity*, Oxx shared heartfelt and intimate reflections on the many struggles encountered along the way as she and her team worked to create a film that captured the diversity of perspectives that have contributed to the Church as it is today. From race relations to sexual abuse, this project forced Oxx and her collaborators to recognize just how difficult it can be to tell stories that honestly reflect the painful as well as the uplifting aspects of the past. For any historian, this is a familiar struggle, yet as Oxx clearly demonstrated their efforts were rewarded when the project finally came together as a multivocal and dynamic story that represents the coalescing of many interacting and conflicting narratives.



Oxx, speaking at the SB Mission, explains the importance of thinking critically about historical narratives. We must ask ourselves, "Who tells a story? To/About/For ...whom/what?"

Bob Orsi *speaks on* "Real Presence"

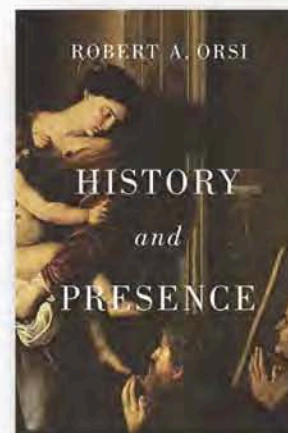
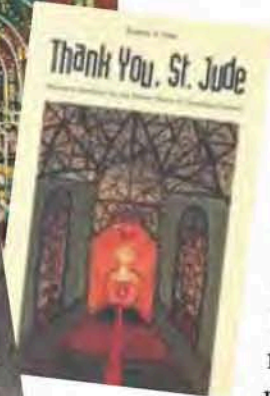
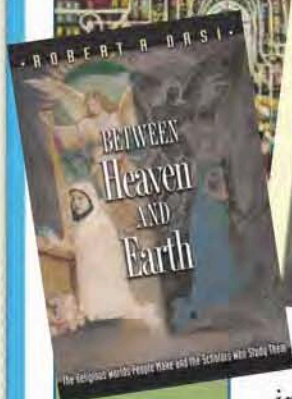
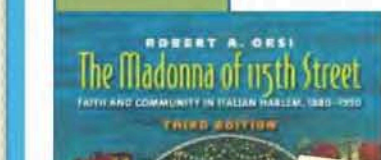


In February, the Department of Religious Studies at UCSB welcomed Robert Orsi, Professor of Religious Studies and History and holder of the Grace Craddock Nagle Chair in Catholic Studies at Northwestern University. As author of numerous well-known works on American Catholic devotional practices -- *Thank You, Saint Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Holy Causes*; *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* -- and the award winning *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* -- we invited Orsi to participate in a variety of events. He engaged in a dialogue about the history of Catholic devotional practices with Professor Taves and undergraduates in *Global Catholicism Today*, discussed historical methodology with graduate students over lunch, and reflected on Catholic Studies with faculty and community members over dinner.

In his public lecture, "The Problem of Presence in Modern Religion and Its Study," he highlighted key aspects of his new book, *History and Presence*, making the case that the 16th

century debates over the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist not only divided Catholics and Protestants but also shaped the way that scholars recount the history of religion in the West.

Engaging examples such as Marian Apparitions and contemporary devotion to saints, Orsi explained that any attempt to produce a deep analysis of religious beliefs and practices requires scholars to shift away from modern, secular assumptions with Protestant origins that leave little room for gods, saints, and other special beings interacting with and within the human world. Orsi argued that to generate a more dynamic, on-the-ground view of historical and religious phenomena, scholars must begin by rescuing the gods from their exile imposed by Western modernity and accepting their real and active presence for many religious peoples in the modern world.





Borderlands International Graduate Student Conference: "Forging Faith(s) in Global Borderlands"

From March 11 to March 13, the fifth biennial Borderlands International Graduate Student Conference was held at University of California Santa Barbara. Co-sponsored by the Virgil Cordano Endowment in Catholic Studies, the conference, "Forging Faith(s) in Global Borderlands," showcased research on the ways borderlands encounters have stimulated the creation, definition, and adaptation of faith identities among various groups of people.

While the conference broadly examined the idea of borderlands as spaces where people of various religions, ethnicities, political systems, and linguistic traditions come into contact, several papers specifically explored and highlighted the role Catholicism played in these encounters and adaptations.



Respondent Michael North, Professor and Chair of Modern History at the Ernst Moritz Arndt University of Greifswald, Germany, addressing a panel on religion and state building

The first paper that examined how Catholicism was involved in these interactions was Karl Johnson from Yale Divinity School. He discussed the Yaquis of Arizona and Zuni Pueblo of New Mexico as examples of indigenous Catholic adoption and self-determination after initially hostile borderland encounters. Both Yaqui and Zuni successfully resisted white colonial control, and when granted

self-determination and respect for indigenous traditions, they adopted Catholicism. Johnson argued that both cases show the adoption of Catholicism in Catholic-indigenous religious borderlands, despite initially hostile colonial encounters, can lead to self-determination.

Maggie Elmore from University of California Berkeley delivered the second paper, titled, "Is it Better to Send them Back?": the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the New Deal and Mexican Migration in the Era of Repatriation.' The paper focused on National Catholic Welfare Conference's (NCWC) effort to mediate the effects of repatriation and extend the protective umbrella of New Deal programs to ethnic Mexicans during the 1930s. Elmore argued that the appointment of high-ranking U.S. Catholic officials to federal agencies gave Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs an air of moral authority and legitimacy, and paved the way for an enduring partnership between Catholics and the U.S. federal government. This emerging collaboration between the NCWC and the Roosevelt's administration provided Mexican Americans in the Southwest with a new set of resources in their pursuit in ending long-standing discriminatory practices.

Eric Ladenthin from the University of Greifswald, Germany delivered a paper on the impact of religious boundaries on the Swedish-French alliance during the Thirty Years' War. He analyzed the collaboration between Catholic Louis XIII of France and Protestant Gustav II Adolf of Sweden during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Both forged an alliance against the Catholic Habsburg Emperor Ferdinand II in Bärwalde in 1631. Ladenthin examined how this alliance was forged and maintained with particular focus on the impact of confessional differences.

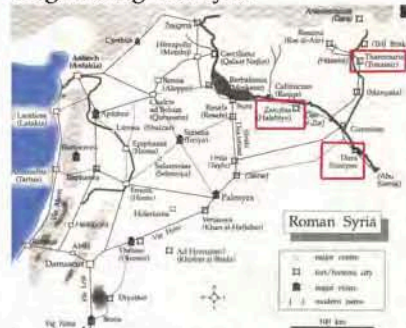
Student Spotlight

Yevgeniy Runkevich



Runkevich is a Cordano Fellow specializing in early Christianity in the Roman Empire with a particular interest in women in early Christianity. In this essay he offers us a tour of the world's oldest known Christian building – a mid-3rd century A.D. house church in Dura-Europos – highlighting the many images of women.

Dura-Europos, a Roman border town whose remains were found in Syria in the beginning of the last century not far from the famous ruins of Palmyra, was a cosmopolitan, multiethnic town, whose inhabitants spoke Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic, Iranian, and several dialects of Aramaic. It was also a very religiously diverse place – besides a house church, a variety of sanctuaries and temples representing a number of Mediterranean religions were discovered there, including a Jewish synagogue. The town and its church are well known to scholars but, unfortunately, are not as well known to the general public. For all its historical value, Dura-Europos never became a major tourist destination, like the neighboring Palmyra.



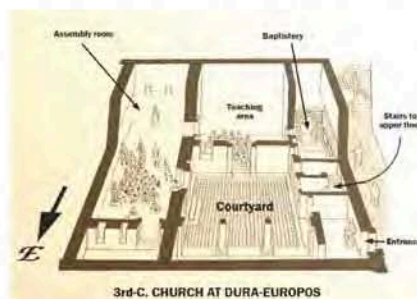
This small, but thriving community came to a sudden end when it was sacked and razed by the Sassanid army in 256 CE.

Ironically, the town's siege and destruction ensured the preservation of the church, the synagogue, and of several other temples. They were all located on a sort of "church street" along the city wall, where they were buried by the emergency rampart the city's defenders constructed in a desperate effort to strengthen the walls from the inside.

In the wake of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a platoon of British soldiers accidentally came upon the remains of this rampart in 1920, almost 1700 years later. Word of the discovery spread fast among the archaeologists at a time when the European colonial powers literally competed for the opportunity to excavate ancient Greco-Roman ruins to fill their museums with the artifacts. When the area came under the French man-date, the British were forced to leave the area and archaeologists from Paris and Yale began excavations in 1920s.

The archaeologists did not immediately realize what they had found. As the excavation's director recalled, it looked like a typical residential house with an inner courtyard – flat-roofed, built with mud-bricks and rubble, mud-plastered, with an unobtrusive entrance. But, as the later research showed, its owners had remodeled it into a house church by tearing a wall between two bedrooms to create a modest assembly hall with plain walls and a platform for the presiding minister, and transforming one of the smaller rooms into a fabulous baptistery, adorned with elaborate and colorful frescoes floor to ceiling. The frescoes allowed the

archeologists to finally identify this building as a Christian church.

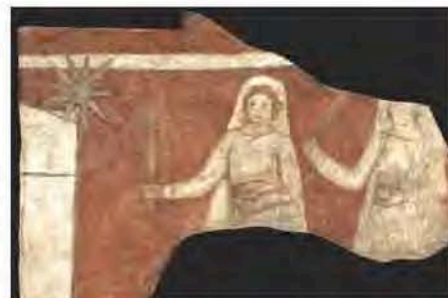


The elaborate decoration of the baptistery was, no doubt, intended to have a visual effect on the baptized. The first images that the catechumen saw entering this special candle-lit chamber were illustrations of some of the most beloved Gospel stories Jesus healing of a paralytic and Jesus walking on water and saving Peter from drowning.



The baptistery at Dura Europos; the women at the tomb are on the right.

They would also immediately see a much larger painting of three women walking with torches at night to Jesus' tomb, not yet aware of his resurrection. Importantly, these images are all imbued with a strong tension between faith and doubt.



An enlarged image of women at the tomb 5

On the wall to the right, there evidently was another almost full-scale painting of, presumably, five women walking in a procession. Only the lower part of the wall with their feet remained in place during the excavation, since this side of the house was razed almost to the ground by the wall-reinforcing rampart that preserved the building. Unfortunately, we will never what Gospel story they represented.

Turning left, catechumens would finally see the major element of the room and their intended destination – an elaborately adorned niche with a baptismal font. Its surrounding walls were brightly decorated in an imitation of natural settings – a vault painted as a starry night sky, an arch covered with vegetation motives. Was it meant to stylize the community's notion of how baptisms used to be originally performed – in the nature, in a stream, and under the cover of the night? Or was it the symbolic representation of the entire cosmos? Or, maybe, both?

Another elaborate composition was painted on the back wall of the baptismal niche. Below were smaller-scale pictures of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Knowledge, and the serpent. Above, there was a full-scale painting of the Good Shepherd with his flock, carrying a wounded sheep on his shoulders. Most probably, this composition was imbued with a deep theological meaning as it illustrated to the baptized the mystery of the ritual – the transfer from the fallen sinful existence into the new and protected status in the Lord's flock.

Finally, while exiting the room after baptism, the new disciple would see two other paintings on both sides of the door. To the right was a large and mysterious figure of a woman

bending over the well, usually interpreted as the Samaritan women from the Gospel of John. In his recent book, *The World's Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria* (2016), Michael Peppard, a professor of theology at Fordham University, made an intriguing and well-grounded argument that this image actually depicts the Virgin Mary. If he is right, this would be by far the earliest known depiction of Mary.



A woman bending over a well.

Finally, to the left of the exit door there were depictions of David and Goliath. Goliath is already lying on the ground, and David is raising his sword victoriously. What could be a better allegory for the spiritual battles that the new Christian was now expecting, as he or she exited the comfortable and comforting space of the church and entered the outside world of this military outpost?

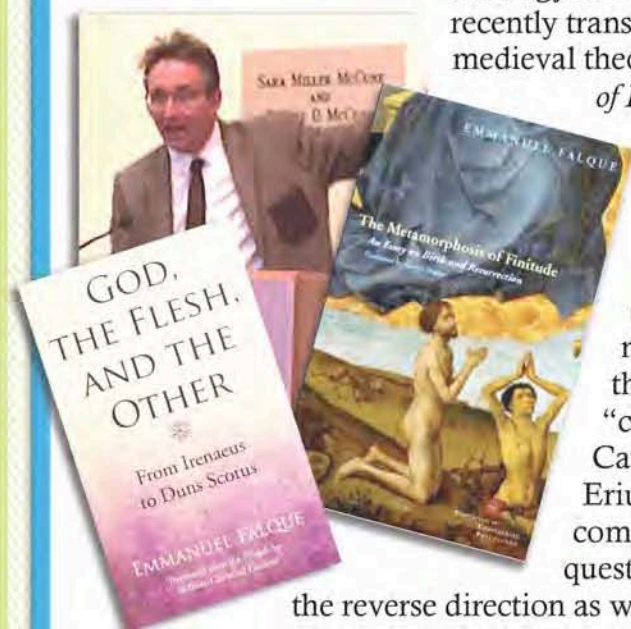
P.S. As was a norm in the early 20th century, the archaeological teams in Dura-Europos employed a find-sharing agreement, i.e. the artifacts were divided between the institutions that led the project. That is how the surviving baptismal frescoes, after an elaborate (and ultimately very damaging) process of removal, ended up in New Haven, in the museum of Yale University, where a life-size replica of the baptismal was specifically constructed to display them. Nowadays, some of them can be seen occasionally in temporary exhibitions at major museums across the country, where the visitors can with their own eyes see this unique “missing link” of Christian architectural and theological evolution: from the first century random gatherings in poor living quarters to the fully dedicated magnificent basilicas of the late antiquity. In this house church we see that the liturgy hall is still being surrounded by plain walls that turn the participants' attention to the sacraments and to their community. Meanwhile, an outstanding place was given to the location of the sacrament of baptism, with its stunning and imagination-inspiring visual surrounding. This link is very fragile – the remaining frescoes, even in the comfort of best-available modern care, are in a constant state of gradual decay. The remaining archaeological treasures of Dura-Europos are literally turning into dust right as major looting and destruction ensued when the region came under the sway of ISIS, living behind only photographs, drawing, reconstructions, excavation reports, museum collections, and memory. But memory is a powerful thing.

Emmanuel Falque

Winter 2016 Tipton Visiting Professor in Catholic Studies



Emmanuel Falque, the J. E. and Lillian Byrne Tipton Distinguished Visiting Professor in Religious Studies at UC Santa Barbara for Winter 2016, is a professor of philosophy and theology at Institut Catholique de Paris. He is the author of several recently translated monographs that explore connections between medieval theology and phenomenology, including *The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection* (2012) and *God, The Flesh and the Other: From Irenaeus to Duns Scotus* (2015).



In February, Professor Falque taught an intensive seminar on these works, in which students were asked to reconsider the relationship and boundary lines between theology and philosophy, between “religious” versus “common” modes of reasoning. His analysis of early Catholic thinkers such as Augustine, Irenaeus, Origen and Eriugena demonstrated how fruitful these sources—commonly deemed “theological”—are for addressing questions within contemporary philosophy more generally. In

the reverse direction as well, his analyses bore out the ways in which modern French and German philosophy help to illuminate and enrich an understanding of Catholic sources, offering new insights and interpretive lenses for examining historic texts. Just as theology can learn from philosophy, so also can philosophy learn from theology. The status of the body and corporality, the construction of community and intersubjectivity, and the possibilities and constraints of finitude are issues common to both traditions of thought, and they bear significance not only for Catholics but for humanity more generally. Professor Falque’s passion for philosophy and for teaching was contagious, and students often stayed long after class had ended to continue discussion with him. We were delighted to have had him as a presence on campus and hope this establishes a long and prosperous connection between UC Santa Barbara and Institut Catholique de Paris, where several graduate students from the seminar hope to do research in the future.

By Eva Braunstein

The J.E. & Lillian Byrne Tipton Distinguished Visiting Professorship in Catholic Studies enables the Department of Religious Studies to bring outstanding scholars and public figures to UCSB for a quarter or longer to teach, present public lectures, and conduct research.

Revelatory Events

The Catholic Backstories

In my forth-coming book, *Revelatory Events: Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths* (Princeton, 2016), I

explore one of the bed-rocks of religious belief--the claim that other-worldly powers are active in human affairs. I do so through an examination of three cases in which insiders claimed that a spiritual presence guided the emergence of a new spiritual path: Mormon-ism, Alcoholics Anonymous, and *A Course in Miracles*. Although it would seem as if the book has little to do with Catholicism, there is in fact a Catholic backstory for each of the cases.

In two, the founding figures were deeply attracted to Catholicism and weighed the possibility of converting. Bill Wilson, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, grew up in Vermont where he had little exposure to Catholicism, but in the wake of the sudden mystical experience that ended his drinking, he found his chief spiritual exemplar in St. Francis and his spiritual director in Father

Edward Dowling, S.J. Although he

was drawn to Catholicism and for a time considered converting, he ultimately could not accept its exclusivist claims. He also successfully convinced another Jesuit, Father John

Ford, that AA was not a new religious movement in competition with the Church, but a generic spiritual path compatible with Catholicism.

Helen Schucman, the Columbia University psychologist who scribed *A Course in Miracles* with the help of her colleague William Thetford, had a life-long attraction to Catholicism. She often stopped by churches to hear Mass and carried a rosary in her pocket, which she said surreptitiously

whenever she was stressed. Father Benedict Groeschel, who studied with Thetford and Schucman in the early seventies, said Mass for them in Schucman's office complete with readings from the *Course*! In the 1970s and 80s, many Catholics in the New York City area were drawn to the *Course*. To overcome this "confusion," the chief teacher of the *Course*, Kenneth Wapnick, and Fordham philosopher, Norris Clarke, another Jesuit, published a dialogue in which they explained how the gnostic orientation of the *Course* departed from orthodox Catholic teachings.

Although there is no direct Catholic connection with early Mormonism, I used the Catholic understanding of the real presence to propose an alternative way of thinking about the reality of the golden plates that Joseph Smith claimed to have recovered. In highlighting the evidence that Smith viewed the relationship between matter and spirit more like Catholics than Calvinists or secular historians, my religious studies approach -- to my surprise -- opened up an option that some liberal Mormons are find compatible with their faith.

So what does this say about Catholic Studies? Surfacing the backstories highlights the unexpected places where Catholicism is intertwined with other traditions and the new angles of vision that Catholicism can open up when exploring other traditions.

By Ann Taves



Thetford and Schucman (above) and Father Benedict Groeschel



Bill W. and Father John C. Ford



Smith receiving the golden plates

Graduate Student Research



Philip Deslippe

A few years ago, I presented and published research on a man named Salvatore Cioffi (1897-1966) who was born in Italy and moved to Brooklyn with his Catholic family as a young child. While working as a chemist a few years out of college, Cioffi was profoundly changed by a chance encounter with a copy of the Buddhist text *The Dhammapada*. He quickly converted to the path of the Buddha, left his family, and travelled to South Asia to take vows and live as a monastic Buddhist. The next four decades of Salvatore Cioffi's life as the Venerable Lokanatha were remarkable. He travelled around Asia and the world as a Buddhist missionary and reformer, and was the catalyst behind the conversion of Dr. Ambedkar—a political reformer and advocate for untouchables in India—to Buddhism, in which he was joined by hundreds of thousands of his followers in the largest mass religious conversion in human history.

In my research of the Venerable Lokanatha, small references to his brother Angelo captured my attention. Angelo stayed in Brooklyn, was ordained a Catholic priest, became a monsignor, and was one of the most important Catholic figures in Brooklyn during a period when the Italian Catholic community there was at its largest and most vibrant. Despite choosing seemingly different paths, the lives of the two brothers were remarkably similar. Angelo was responsible for the construction of the Basilica of Regina Pacis, and called upon parishioners to donate

their jewelry to be used in the making of two crowns for images of the Virgin and Infant Jesus. Lokanatha was involved in a similar drive on the other side of the world, encouraging women to donate gold to help guild the Shwedagon Pagoda in

Myanmar.



Brothers Angelo Cioffi and the Venerable Lokanatha

Thanks in part to research funding assistance from the Cordano endowment, I was able to travel to New York in May of this year where I met with the nephew of the Venerable Lokanatha who

gave me copies of the correspondence between his uncle and his father from over sixty years ago. I also went to the archives of Columbia University where I was able to see other letters written by Lokanatha, and to the Diocese in Brooklyn, where I was able to view the deceased priest file of Msgr. Angelo Cioffi. I hope to write a piece on the relationship between the two brothers, the similarities between them, and the influence of the Venerable Lokanatha's Catholic upbringing on his work as a Buddhist reformer.



Philip with nephew of the Venerable Lokanatha

Kolby Knight

Beginning this year, I took over as chair of the Catholic Studies Unit for the Western Religion of the American Academy of Religion from Lauren Griffin, who graduated last year. As chair, I helped to organize and presided over two panels at the regional meeting in Tucson, AZ. Looking forward, I am exploring issues relating to Catholic labor unions, public schools, and the emergence of financial institutions at the end of the nineteenth century in the United States in a transnational and comparative perspective. I am also interested in examining scholarly and media representations of the Roman Catholic Women-priests, specifically, how the portrayal of the group as "dissenting" overlooks its own claims of continuity with Roman Catholic tradition and history.



Graduate Student Research, con't



Nathan Fisher

My research investigates distressing experiences associated with contemplative practice in contemporary Abrahamic traditions. Based on interviews with over 50 practitioners, teachers, and scholars, I am exploring what are experiencing and how they are understanding or interpreting their experiences. Of the third of my sample that are involved in Christian contemplative practices, the majority are Catholic religious who are active in the Centering Prayer movement. Through my interviews, I found that almost all the Christians made reference to the "Dark Night of the Soul" by St John of the Cross and that many non-Christians use the term as well. Tracing the ways in which this term is being used in Christian contemplative communities and beyond has proven to be a fruitful avenue of research thus far and I look forward to pursuing this line of inquiry with the qualitative coding software that Catholic Studies has made available to me.

When Paul (1 Cor 8:1) addressed the Corinthian churches' question about whether or not they should eat food that has been sacrificed to idols, he confronted a question about how a newly minted Christian might socialize with a pagan who invited that Christian for meal. Having been given a grant of \$1000 last summer to help me defray the costs of the six weeks I spent with the American School of Classical Studies at Athens touring archaeological sites in Greece, I was able to see the sites of some of the pagan sanctuaries where the anxious congregants of Paul's churches might have dined. The sanctuary of Aphrodite on the summit of the Corinthian acropolis, the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on its slopes, the temple of Apollo down in the city—these and other archaeological sites around Greece furnished me with images of the landscape in which Christianity came of age, the Roman East. What the material culture of first century Greece can tell us about the experience of the Gentile Christians in Paul's congregations remains the focus of my work, an attempt to unpack the many meanings of the "idolatry" that concerns Paul in his letters. While Paul's theology dominates the study of his letters, only a better understanding of the social world in which the members of his churches lived can give some life to the people whose questions about their faith established the ways Christians would encounter paganism. Thanks to my Catholic Studies grant, I walked in the ruins of that world in Corinth, in Athens, in Thessaloniki, in Crete, and in many other places, and my research will never be the same.

Marshall Evans

