



# FACULTIES' CONVOCATION AT HOWARD, SEPTEMBER 26

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The Thirty-Fourth Annual Faculties' Convocation will be hosted by the Howard University School of Divinity in Northeast Washington on Monday, September 26 from 3-7 pm . An ecumenical prayer service will be followed by a number of talks offered by the Consortium co-authors of the book *Love for the Poor*.

Following the presentations, all Consortium Faculty members are invited to dinner in the School's dining hall, courtesy of the Consortium. The faculty interest groups will inaugurate their year of discussions with organizational meetings. The Faculty Groups are among the most important ecumenical fellowships hosted by the Consortium. Most Faculty Groups meet once or twice during the academic year for a meal and discussion, which is often sparked by a paper read by one of the colleagues. Some



*Inside: Beginning with Fr. Crossin's letter on page 3, the co-authors of Love for the Poor, pictured above, remark upon their experiences of ecumenical discussion.*

long-established groups also develop public presentations for the benefit of the greater community--for an example, see the Arts and Spirituality project announcement on page 2.

For more information, or for faculty who may wish to take a leadership role in a Faculty Group, please contact Fr. John Crossin at 202-832-2675.

# NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, SEPTEMBER 8

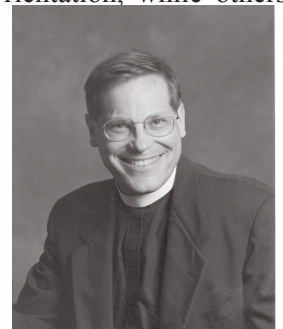
The Consortium's Fall Orientation for New Students will begin with an ecumenical prayer service. This year the service will be held in Caldwell Chapel at Catholic University, in Northeast Washington, on Thursday, September 8 at 4:30 p.m. The prayer service will be planned by the Consortium Student Board, led by new Student Board Chair Katherine Case of Catholic University (see article on page 2) and by the event organizer, Matthew Schuster of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg.

The service is not a Communion service but a time of shared Christian worship that includes hymns, prayers, a psalm, and readings from the Scriptures. This year's presider and homilist will be Rev. Dr. Mark Oldenburg, Chaplain and Professor of Worship at Lutheran Theological Seminary.

After the prayer service, at about 5:30, all in attendance will be welcomed for dinner at nearby seminaries

and religious communities. Following dinner, which is paid for by the Consortium, seminarians and faculty at the host houses lead discussions with the visiting students. This event has received a great deal of positive feedback in the past, with some going so far as to say it was one of the highlights of their seminary years.

Some of the member institutions send a bus or two filled with students to the Orientation, while others encourage their students to carpool or take the Metro together to the evening's festivities. All necessary transportation to and from dinner will be provided, and everyone can expect to be back at Catholic University to begin the journey home by about 9:30 p.m.



## New Student Board Chair: Katherine Case

Please join us in welcoming the Chair of the 2006 Consortium Student Board. Katherine Case is a PhD student in Catechesis/ Religious Education at Catholic University, with special interests in liturgy and education, imagination, and inter-church families. She was elected Chair at the last formal Student Board meeting last spring, by a unanimous vote. The Chair works with the Consortium staff to provide leadership and direction ---of the Student Board.

Katie, who is Catholic, has had a life-long interest in ecumenism because of personal relationships in her family and in spiritual friendships. She said, "Some of my deepest conversion experiences have resulted from my friendships with Christians of other traditions."

In recent years the Student Board has pursued new projects. For example, the Student Board is currently testing different models for the charitable service component that many Board members would like to add.

## Spirituality and the Arts Events Sponsored by the Arts Faculty Group

### *Fall 2005: Shakespeare's Othello*

Under the leadership of Dr. John Farina of the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University, the Consortium's Arts Faculty Group has developed a new program called **Spirituality and the Arts**. This academic year, Spirituality and the Arts will be inaugurated with two events, one in the fall, in cooperation with the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, DC, and another, musical event, still in the organizational stages, that will be held next spring.

On Tuesday, October 18, Consortium faculty, staff, students, and members of our auxiliary group, The Friends of the Consortium, are invited to join us for the 7:30 p.m. performance of Shakespeare's *Othello* at the Shakespeare Theatre. Tickets must be purchased for the event, directly through the box office of the Theatre.

After the play, the Rev. Dr. Roger Ferlo, Director of the Center for Lifetime Theological Education at Virginia Theological Seminary, will lead a post-performance discussion about good and evil in *Othello*.

Guests are welcome for all the evening's events, but seats are limited--please reserve tickets now by calling the Shakespeare Theatre Box Office, at 202-547-1122.

Katie plans to continue the Student Board's progress in fresh directions, and in addition to fostering the service component, will begin to initiate programs designed to increase student involvement in the Consortium and in ecumenism. The first of these projects, tentatively entitled "The Ecumenical Road Show," will include a **Fall 2005 essay contest** for students in Consortium institutions. Winners of the contest must commit to three Spring 2006 presentations of their papers; each of these presentations will be held at a different Consortium school. The goal of this project is to provide more opportunities for ecumenical discussions among Consortium students and faculties.

For more information about these programs, or to learn how you might become involved with the Consortium Student Board, please contact Kathy Pluth at the Consortium offices: [pluth@washtheocon.org](mailto:pluth@washtheocon.org), or 202-832-2675.

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## *Students and Faculty Reminder*

*Cross-registration is by far the Consortium's most-used member benefit. In cross-registration, students at any of the member schools may register for a course at any other school, while paying their home school's tuition. Please keep the option of cross-registration in mind during registration periods for January and Spring semesters. For more information on cross-registration, see your Registrar, and visit the Cross-Registration Policy page on the Consortium's website, <http://www.washtheocon.org/policy.html>.*

## REFLECTIONS *from the* EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

The Faculties' Convocation at Howard on September 26 will be a Consortium watershed—a culminating point for a major project. The day will focus on **Love for the Poor [God's Love for the Poor and the Church's Witness to it]**—an important Christian virtue and the tentative title for a book of essays.

A **short history** might be in order. Four years ago, Dr. Ann Riggs, newly appointed Director of the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches, gave a presentation to a Consortium faculty group at Wesley. In the course of the evening she mentioned that the Faith and Order Commission might decide to revisit the Council's foundations for thinking theologically about issues of poverty--as this had not been done for quite a few years. This proposal met with an enthusiastic response from the group present that spring evening.

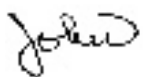
That summer Dr. Riggs asked me to invite those who had been in attendance and other scholars from the Consortium institutions to form a group with her to work on the question. While many faculty contacted were busy with other academic and educational projects, several of us did come together to explore the possibilities. [The participants are listed in the accompanying article.]

The conversations and dialogue that occurred over the next three years was/is one of the **most enriching experiences** of my life. The six of us came from six different Christian traditions. Initially I was the only person who knew everyone. We had many splendid conversations—on the main topic, and away from it—during our monthly meetings. I learned a great deal from these wonderful colleagues—about their lives, their spiritual journeys, their great theological depth and their unfailing love and kindness.

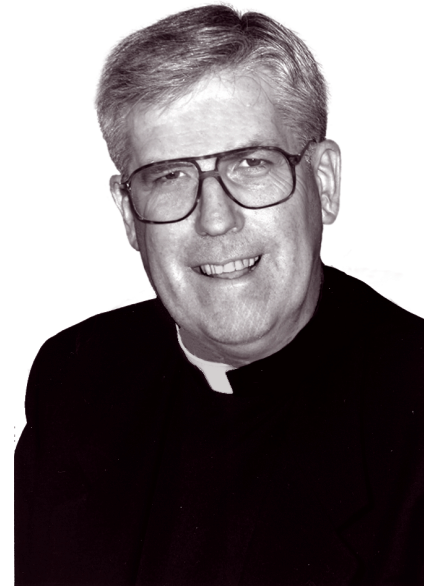
As the months and years passed by, we came to surprising consensus in our views—so much so that we are developing a **Joint Statement** to go with our essays. My own contribution is on the classic Christian virtue of prudence—wisdom in decision making. We need wisdom in choosing among the plethora of programs proposed for 'dealing with' international and national poverty issues. Prudence is rooted in prayer and contemplation. Prudence involves getting the facts and understanding moral principles. Prudence involves listening humbly to the voices of others in the Christian community. Prudent people seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I hope that in future years other groups of faculty from the Consortium institutions will be able to embrace such projects. They are not only personally enriching but provide a service to the church.

Peace,



John



*Rev. Dr. John Crossin, OSFS  
Executive Director  
Washington Theological Consortium*

## An Ecumenical Theological Book: *Love for the Poor*

In a collaborative effort of the Washington Theological Consortium and the National Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission, a new book on a subject close to the very heart of Christianity is being completed. *Love for the Poor* was written by the six members of the National Council of Churches' Poverty Study Group, which is an ecumenical and multidisciplinary group made up in large part of faculty of Consortium schools. The six co-authors have met regularly for two years, during which they discussed the issues surrounding poverty. They had two goals: the publication of the book and a joint statement. As the conversations continued, the co-authors shared the chapters that each was writing, exchanging comments and gaining a greater understanding of the others' points of view.

Kathleen Pluth, the Consortium's Director of Communications, recently asked the project participants to comment on the experience as a whole, and on their own particular contributions.

According to Ann Riggs, Director of the Faith and Order Commission and one of the organizers of the project, said that the conversations leading up to this book's publication have tended—unusually—towards

a convergence of viewpoints. She says that in many ecumenical conversations, care is especially needed at the deepest levels of conversation in order to respect others' differing views. **Ann Riggs:** "But in this conversation, the more deeply we engaged one another, the more we could see that our differences were different perspectives on a shared agreement."

**Beverly Mitchell:** "I was pleased by how easily we came to a consensus regarding significant dimensions of this project despite the differences in our personal backgrounds, experiences, and theological traditions."

**Shaun Casey:** "I found the whole collegial process to be very stimulating and challenging. I was heartened that we came to consensus on the fact that works of mercy for the poor cut across the whole of church history and each of our respective traditions. We also had a very fruitful conversation about the relationship between the Christian virtue of prudence and our approach to describing a version of human flourishing and its implications for fighting poverty. It was truly a growth experience for me."



***The Consortium's Task Force on Poverty***

*From left, Dr. Eric Crump, of the ELCA, Systematician at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg; Dr. Shaun Casey, of the Churches of Christ, Ethicist at Wesley Theological Seminary; Rev. Dr. Katherine Grieb, and Episcopal priest, New Testament, Virginia Theological Seminary; Dr. Beverly Mitchell, an Historical/ Systematician, Wesley Theological Seminary, Dr. Ann Riggs, of the Society of Friends (Quakers), Historical Theologian, Director of the National Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission, and Rev. Dr. John Crossin, a Roman Catholic Religious and priest, Ethicist and Executive Director of the Washington Theological Consortium*

**Kathy Grieb:** “I was delighted to find that our conversation deepened and developed over time so that we really learned how to incorporate one another’s ideas into our thinking. Our work was also written in conscious dialogue with other voices, both past and present, in order to achieve the fullest possible treatment of our subject.”

**Shaun Casey:** “My essay concentrates on giving a snapshot of the current realities of global and domestic poverty, a summary of antipoverty efforts in the U.S., and some thoughts about how to proceed theologically while addressing these policy discussions.”

**Eric Crump:** “The essay I contributed was ‘Poverty, Grace, and the Magnanimity of Faith: Towards a Theological Ethics of Freedom as Generosity, Love, and Responsibility.’ The specific aim of the paper was to examine poverty in relation to the notion of economic freedom and develop a theological ethics of freedom within the framework of grace as the appropriate theological approach to the issue of poverty. My paper approached virtues as powers of freedom and argued for the primacy of the virtue of generosity in relation to that of responsibility, while acknowledging that the virtue of responsibility has priority in a sinful world. In many ways my paper was an attempt to respond theologically to the brilliant work of Amartya Sen that rigorously interrelates ethics and economics.”

**Beverly Mitchell:** “I contributed two essays to the book: ‘Patristic Insights of Faith and Wealth’ and ‘A Spirituality of Justice.’ My decision to write an essay on the insights of John Chrysostom and the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus came as a result of two things. First, my work in both the history of the Christian church, but also in systematic theology has given me an appreciation for these figures. I was delighted to realize how much attention they gave to the issue of care for the poor as a *religious* responsibility. Next, I volunteered to write an essay about this dimension of the relationship between faith and concern for the welfare of those in need. Although there have been numerous examples in the history of the Christian church where individuals and/or groups understood the importance of a theological foundation for an ethic of justice-making, I chose Saint Francis of Assisi as an example of one Christian whose expression of spirituality could offer important insights for our time. It was also significant to me that adherents to the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant traditions can identify with Saint Francis, who continues to draw admirers who are searching for a spirituality which recognizes the connection between the spiritual life and social justice.”

**Kathy Grieb:** “My own work on possible approaches to the topic of poverty within the Bible was influenced by Beverly Mitchell’s and Ann Riggs’s work on patristic exegesis, by John Crossin’s focus on virtue ethics, by Eric Crump’s interests in reformation hermeneutics and theology, and by Shaun Casey’s studies of the worldwide face of poverty and the importance of the churches’ response to this crisis.”

**Eric Crump:** “I realized in the course of this work the shortcoming of theological education and its paucity of theological attention to economic issues, which is surprising given the ‘economic’ metaphors that have so influenced the history of Christian thought.

I think that the major insight I gleaned during the process was an appreciation for the difficulty in crafting an ecumenical position, especially in terms of the language employed, that emerged in the light of our conversations. “

**Kathy Grieb:** “I was delighted to participate in this work on an ecumenical approach to poverty for two reasons: First, I have been interested in ecumenical and interfaith conversation as long as I can remember. I’m proud of our Consortium and the important work it does in keeping these conversations going. The second reason is the ongoing importance of the topic: wealth, poverty, and the right use of riches is the most frequently mentioned ethical topic in the Bible. It pervades every part of the Scriptures. Christians have remembered love for the poor as one of the main teaching emphases of Jesus of Nazareth.”

**Beverly Mitchell:** “It was refreshing to find that there was authentic freedom to ‘do’ theology in a context in which respect, affection, and a desire to learn from one another was the order of the day.”

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**Note: The six co-authors of *Love for the Poor* will present their research and speak further about this collaborative experience at the Faculties’ Convocation, to be held at the Howard University School of Divinity, Monday, September 26, 3:00 to 7:00 p.m.**

## SCIENCE AND RELIGION LECTURE

The 2005 Science and Religion November event features prominent biophysicist and author Harold Morowitz. Dr. Morowitz will speak at the Washington Theological Union on Friday, November 4, from 12-2 p.m. His talk is entitled "Evolutionary Emergence and the Divine."

Dr. Morowitz is Clarence J. Robinson Professor of Biology and Natural Philosophy at George Mason University. He has authored nearly 20 books and published well over 100 scholarly articles. Professor Morowitz taught for many years at Yale, and has been the Director of the Krasnow Institute for Advanced Study, where he remains as Staff Scientist, and was Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Complexity*. Most recently he wrote *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex*, which was published in 2002 by Oxford University Press.

The Science and Religion Group is one of the 20 faculty interest groups which are organized by the Consortium. Each year the group produces a public program in November for the benefit of the greater community. This event is free and open to the public, and lunch will be provided free of charge by the Consortium to all who attend. Please call the Consortium office at 202-832-2675 to make reservations, or email Marguerite Connolly at [wtc@washtheocon.org](mailto:wtc@washtheocon.org).

### CONSORTIUM UPCOMING EVENTS:

- New Student Orientation**  
Sept. 8 New students of Consortium institutions are invited to this opening ecumenical prayer service at Caldwell Chapel at Catholic University, from 4:30-9:30. A free dinner and discussion will follow. Please see article, page 1.
- Consortium Faculties' Convocation**  
Sept. 26 The Convocation will be held at Howard University School of Divinity from 3:00-7:00 p.m. For more details, please see articles on pages 1, 3, and 4-5.
- Arts and Spirituality Event**  
Oct. 18 The National Shakespeare Theatre's production of Othello. For tickets, please call the theatre's Box Office, at 202-547-1122. For details, please see article, page 2, or contact the Consortium Office at 202-832-2675.
- Evolutionary Emergence and the Divine**  
Nov. 4 Professor Harold Morowitz will speak on "Evolutionary Emergence and the Divine." The talk will be held at WTU from noon to 2 p.m. Please see article at the top of this page.

## WTC Member Institutions:

- ▣ Catholic University of America, School of Theology and Religious Studies
- ▣ Cathedral College at the Washington National Cathedral *Associate*
- ▣ Dominican House of Studies
- ▣ Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences *Affiliate*
- ▣ Howard University School of Divinity
- ▣ InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington *Affiliate*
- ▣ Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg
- ▣ Richmond Theological Consortium:  
Union Theological/PSCE  
Baptist Theological Seminary  
Virginia Union School of Theology
- ▣ St. Paul's College *Associate*
- ▣ Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation *Associate*
- ▣ Virginia Theological Seminary
- ▣ Washington Theological Union
- ▣ Wesley Theological Seminary
- ▣ Woodstock Theological Center *Associate*

Please check [www.washtheocon.org](http://www.washtheocon.org) for additional announcements and featured member events.

The Bulletin is the official newsletter of the Washington Theological Consortium, 487 Michigan Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20017. Please direct all phone inquiries to: 202-832-2675, all articles, submissions, other inquiries, suggestions, and responses to the above noted address and/or our fax: 202-526-0818 or our e-mail address: [WTC@washtheocon.org](mailto:WTC@washtheocon.org) and visit our website at [www.washtheocon.org](http://www.washtheocon.org). To contact the editor, Kathleen Pluth, please email [pluth@washtheocon.org](mailto:pluth@washtheocon.org) or call the number listed above.