
COMMUNIQUÉ

A Supplement to *COMMUNIO* Vol. 36, No. 4

Number 18, Winter 2009

COMMUNIO STUDY CIRCLES: Update on 2009 Activities

We are happy to announce that there are several new *Communio* Study Circles in the United States. For a full list of circles and their coordinators, please refer to the Study Circles page at the end of the printed journal, or on our website at www.communio-icr.com/circles.htm.

If you don't see a circle near you, why not start one? We'd be very glad to help. Please send us a note at communio@aol.com and we'll send you some information on getting started. Once you're ready to begin, we'll add your name and contact information to our lists so local readers will know how to find you.

New Circles

The first of our new circles is in **Corbin, Kentucky**, organized by Jon Cooley. If you live within commuting distance of this group and would be interested in discussion and reflection on the themes in *Communio*, Mr. Cooley's contact information is the following: Jon K. Cooley, 69 Sampson Street, Corbin, KY 40701, or jcooley@unionky.edu.

The second new group, in **Cleveland, Ohio**, has had several meetings and has found what seems to be a convenient schedule. Peter Petretich may be reached at 216.401.4104 or at communiocleveland@gmail.com. Please read the summary below to find out more about this new group.

The study circle in **El Paso, Texas**, has also reached a tentative format (see summary below), and welcomes new members to join the discussion. James Hubbard may be contacted at: jimh.eppc@sbcglobal.net.

Coronado, California

According to a report from group organizer Jim Holman, the Southern California *Communio* group met in mid-July in Coronado (San Diego) to discuss Tracey Rowland's article, "Natural Law: From Neo-Thomism to Nuptial Mysticism" and William Portier's "Thomist Resurgence," both from the Fall 2008 issue.

It was proposed that the members hold a discussion in Los Angeles last fall. Father Robert Gaestel, a *Communio* subscriber and vicar at the Church of the Angels (Episcopal) in Pasadena, welcomed the group to his parish hall on October 25. As Jim stated, that Sunday was a "Balthasar Sunday." The participants took up David M. McCarthy's "Scripture and Ethics: Bearings From Balthasar" and Rodrigo Polanco's "Balthasar and Irenaeus: The Total Glorification of God and Man in God," both from the Spring 2009 issue.

Father Gaestel has offered his parish hall for further meetings. Please inquire with the coordinator as to the date of the next gathering.

Fresno, California

Dorothy de Joseph would like to notify all *Communio* readers in the Fresno area that the "Aquinas Circle" (the nickname of the Fresno *Communio* Study Circle) is still meeting regularly and welcomes new members. Please contact her at dtdejoseph@aol.com.

Bridgewater, Connecticut

The Promisek *Communio* Study Circle continues to meet once a month to focus on articles from *Communio*. "Particularly memorable from last year," Roger Duncan writes, "are Antonio López's 'Mary, Certainty of Our Hope' (Summer 2008), which led us into a concentration on the mystery of suffering; Tracy Rowland's 'Natural Law: From Neo-Thomism to Nuptial Mysticism' (Fall 2008), where our discussion was supplemented with Pope Benedict's speech to the United Nations; and the reprint of de Lubac's 'The Total Meaning of God and the World' (Winter 2008), which sparked intense discussion on the question of human progress, comparing Balthasar and de

In this issue . . .

- Update on *Communio* Study Circles
 - *Ratzinger in Communio*, vol. 1: *The Unity of the Church* published by Eerdmans
 - 2009 Conference on "Experience": Papers to be published in 2010
 - Upcoming Themes
-

Lubac on this issue.” Some of the Study Circle members attended a Promisek-sponsored reading of Karel Čapek’s *Rossum’s Universal Robots*, which continued the focus on the question of progress.

Cleveland, Ohio

We welcome to our list a new Study Circle in Cleveland, Ohio, which started under the guidance of Peter Petretich.

The Cleveland Communio Study Circle held its inaugural meeting on December 14, 2009, where the members discussed two essays: “Priesthood: A Sacrament of the Father” by José Granados (Summer 2009) and “Communio: A Program” by Hans Urs von Balthasar (Originally published in 1972 and reprinted in Fall 1992 and Spring 2006).

The format of the new circle is to begin by gathering in prayer at 7:00 p.m. in the basement meeting area of Mac’s Backs Paperbacks on the second Monday of each month. According to Peter Petretich, Mac’s Backs is conveniently located at the heart of the Coventry Village neighborhood in Cleveland Heights (Address: 1820 Coventry Road, Phone: 216.321.2665). In addition, the group plans to go for dinner or coffee afterward to continue the discussion.

If you would be interested in joining this study circle, please contact Peter Petretich at 216.401.4104 or communiocleveland@gmail.com.

Omaha, Nebraska

The Omaha Communio Group is still going strong under the new leadership of Fr. Val Peter. The group meets at the Sisters of Mercy Village, with the participation of Fr. Peter, Fr. Ted Richling, and Sr. Marilyn Wallace.

Among the articles discussed, Fr. Peter noted John Macquarrie’s article from the Summer 1980 issue, “Immaculate Conception”; Stratford Caldecott’s editorial, “*Caritas in veritate* and ‘Integral Human Development’” from the Summer 2009 issue; and Jean-Pierre Batut’s article, “Calling Fathers ‘Father’: Usurping the Name of God?” also from Summer 2009.

Fr. Peter noted that there had been a lively discussion on Macquarrie’s reflections on Original Sin and Mary’s freedom from it. The conversation on fatherhood raised the point that “Christians tend to forget that God’s fatherhood only emerges clearly with the appearance of the Son.” The Son demonstrates the “need to purify the divine title from all anthropomorphic underpinnings” in

order to understand God’s fatherhood. The finding of the Child Jesus in the temple, together with the crucifixion, are especially helpful in understanding what it means to say “Father.”

Finally, Fr. Peter outlined four points that emerged in the group’s discussion of integral human development:

The first is Pope Benedict’s insistence that the Trinity is the basis for diversity within *communio*, which is a more fruitful approach than that of the secular culture. “The Holy Father’s idea that human development must remain open to the transcendent is something that Christian leaders need first to think about and second to embrace.”

The second is the idea that a “self-interested individual will exist in splendid isolation and be of help to no one unless that isolation is overcome by the giving and forgiving that transcend justice.”

Third is the Holy Father’s embrace of the Bologna School of Sociology in stating that we should “look to new economic systems and not merely the old ones.” This point was of great interest for the whole group.

Finally, the group was encouraged by Pope Benedict’s reminder that human development depends on our “rising above a materialistic vision of human events.”

Jersey City, New Jersey

Matt Laracy gives a short update: “The North New Jersey Communio Study Group, tiny and relaxed, gathers to discuss each issue of *Communio* over a light dinner and plentiful wine, usually on a Sunday afternoon. New members are most welcome.”

Bathgate, North Dakota

Lydia Reynolds from the Virgil Michel Center outlines the events of the North Dakota group: In early June, the group held a symposium, with Petroc Willey, Deputy Director of the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham, England, and a group of about 30 priests, directors of religious education, and interested laypeople. This followed upon the priestly ordination of Fr. Peter Sharpe (one of the founders of the Virgil Michel Center), and a Family Day in celebration, with Fr. Joseph Hattie, O.M.I. as guest speaker and friend of the Center.

The Bethlehem Community, the lay association that heads the Virgil Michel Center, has been working on developing statutes for its canonical recognition.

Center Valley, Pennsylvania

The Center Valley Study Circle met four times last semester in the homes of Dr. Larry Chapp, Dr. Rodney Howsare, and Dr. Stephen Loughlin (all of DeSales University). Among the articles discussed were “Natural Law and the Body: Between Deductivism and Parallelism” by David Crawford and “Natural Law: The First Grace” by Glenn Olsen. The group followed this conversation on natural law with a “non-communio” essay on the same topic by Robert Sokolowski to supplement the dialogue. The semester of meetings was concluded with a reading of the article on theological paternity, “Priesthood: A Sacrament of the Father,” by José Granados. The meetings were well attended with an average of 35 people present at each event. “As always,” Larry Chapp reports, “the discussion period was followed by a lively social reception where the conversations carried on into the late evening.”

Memphis, Tennessee

Glenna Bradshaw, coordinator for the Memphis Study Circle, announces that the group completed its fourth year of meetings in November 2009. “This was also the month we finished reading *Jesus of Nazareth* by Pope Benedict.”

In January, the members took up his latest encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*. “I doubt we would have had the courage to tackle this encyclical four years ago,” Glenna says, “but over the years we’ve become more comfortable with the Holy Father’s writing style and the depth of his thought. To say that our faith has been enriched in the process would be an understatement! Studying his writings every month has also helped meld us together as a group and given us tools that we didn’t have before to confront our culture. While I’m sure we don’t understand all the nuances that each writing by the Pope has to offer us, the Holy Spirit seems to meet us where we are and guide us faithfully!”

Dallas, Texas

Rose Marie Chisholm and the Dallas Communio group especially enjoyed the Winter 2008 issue on de Lubac. She writes, “Since some members knew little of his life and writings, we did some research on it for a meeting, as well as discussing the articles.” They also discussed the historical context surrounding his writings, e.g., France during the WWI and WWII, and the history of Thomism and Neo-Thomism.

The group meets at Mt. Carmel Center in Dallas, where most of the members live.

El Paso, Texas

A Communio study group in El Paso is just taking off. Initially, the members will be a group that, this year, completed studies at the Loyola Institute of Ministry, a New Orleans master’s degree program in pastoral studies. The group will begin by studying and reflecting on a book by Ladislav Orsy, S.J., *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates*.

If you live in the area and are interested in joining the group, please contact James Hubbard by email at jimh.eppc@sbcglobal.net.

Martinsburg, West Virginia

The Martinsburg Communio Study Circle continues to hold its bi-weekly meetings together with the Shepherd’s Gate Christian Life Community (CLC), reports group-organizer Don Patthoff. Since 2005, the group has selected articles and passages from recent issues of *Communio* to match the theme of its meetings. An open invitation continues to be extended to the members of St. Joseph parish and the local community.

In the meetings prior to Advent, the group found “strong resonance with the Summer 2009 issue on Paternity.” The ten-member core group was first introduced to the theme through passages from Tony Anatrella’s article: “Disappearing Fathers, Destabilized Families.” “The group thought the theme was integrated nicely into the work of CLC and decided to explore Peter Gilbert’s ‘Not an Anthologist: John Bekkos as a Reader of the Fathers,’ which was in the same issue. The circle plans to continue exploring passages of the other articles on paternity as they coincide with the CLC discussions (which are also exploring the Creighton Daily Reflections website). All of this made for a very insightful experience of Advent and Christmas. Our grateful thanks go out to the editors of *Communio* for sharing this rich and unending sense of Church and God’s Kingdom.”

Waterloo, Ontario

In his update, Peter Erb announces that the “Waterloo Communio study group continued its monthly gatherings fairly regularly during 2009, holding, in addition, a May seminar to continue its reflections on the Church as a ‘Perfect Society.’ These included a September lecture on contemporary Catholic novelists in Atlantic Canada, Sunday afternoon seminars on Henri de Lubac’s *Catholicism* in August, and on Benedict’s *Jesus of Nazareth* in October.”

Zouk Mikayel, Lebanon

Edward Alam offers the following summary of the activities of the Lebanon Study Circle:

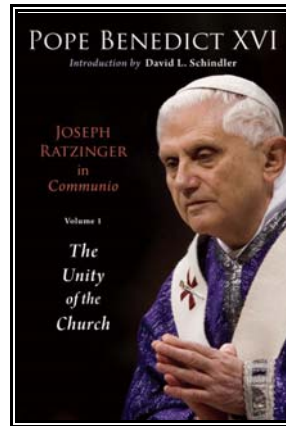
The Communio Study Circle in Lebanon had two successful meetings in 2009. “The first, in the summer of 2009, brought together, in the home of Doumit Salameh, prominent scholars from Germany and the U.S., who joined the Lebanese group (12 in all) to reflect upon Pope Benedict XVI’s third encyclical letter, *Caritas in veritate*. The presenter, Thomas Scheffler, a visiting Professor to Lebanon from Germany, expounded the encyclical in the light of his Political Science research in Lebanon. Scheffler pointed out that whereas encyclicals usually get a lot of press in Lebanon, this particular encyclical went practically unheeded; he suggested that as the encyclical praised Paul VI’s *Populorum progressio* as the modern day *Rerum novarum*, he suspected that most Lebanese, with their ‘capitalist’ leanings, simply were not interested. Nonetheless, Scheffler also pointed out that in spite of the cold reception that encyclicals with ‘socialist’ leanings generally receive in Lebanon, there were pockets of intense enthusiasm.

“In this regard, he reflected on the work of the French Dominican, L.J. Lebreton (1897-1966), one of the most important influences in the writing of *Populorum progressio*. Lebreton spent considerable time in Lebanon and inspired a number of Lebanese thinkers and activists to continue taking Catholic Social Teaching seriously. Today, institutions such as the Lebanese Institute for Economic and Social Development (ILDES), continue to be inspired by the work of this great French, ‘Lebanese’ thinker.

“The second meeting was held on December 18th, in the home of Habib C. Malik, the son of Charles Malik, the great Lebanese philosopher and statesman, who arguably had the single most important role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights during his tenure at the United Nations. Thomas Rourke’s article, ‘Fundamental Politics: What We Must Learn From the Social Thought of Benedict XVI’ (Fall 2008) was presented by Edward Alam. The presentation and subsequent discussions, punctuated by a splendid dinner and fine French and Lebanese wines, were so lively that another meeting had to be scheduled in order to complete the article. The group, made up primarily of Lebanese Maronite and Orthodox scholars from different disciplines, also boasts of having an erudite Mennonite Political Scientist among its membership, which made the discussion of Rourke’s article especially animated.

“The group had its follow-up meeting on January 22nd to complete the discussion of Rourke’s article, as well as a meeting on February 26th to discuss Alexander Schmemmann’s article on Solzhenitsyn (Fall 2008).”

Communio, Washington, D.C.



The *Communio* office in Washington, D.C., is very happy to report that the first volume of the three-volume collection of *Communio* articles by Joseph Ratzinger is now available from Eerdmans Publishing Co. (2010): *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio*, vol. 1: *The Unity of the Church*, with an introduction by editor David L. Schindler. The second and third volumes are forthcoming.

In December, 2009, several *Communio* editors and authors took part in a conference held in Washington, D.C. at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute at The Catholic University of America. The papers from the conference, on “The Nature of Experience,” will be published in the Summer 2010 edition.

In other news, the international editorial meeting in May 2010 will take place in Venice, Italy, hosted by Cardinal Angelo Scola. Last May’s meeting in Chur, Switzerland, introduced a new series for the international editions on the nature of the Church. More information on this new series will be coming soon in the pages of *Communio*.

.....

Forthcoming Themes in *Communio*:

Spring 2010
The Paschal Mystery

Summer 2010
The Nature of Experience

Fall 2010
Caritas in veritate

Additional upcoming themes: “The Ascension,”
“Work & Creativity,” “Belief in the Church,”
“The Trinity and the Familial Image.”

.....

Sara Trudeau, Editor, COMMUNIQUÉ
Communio, P.O. Box 4557, Washington, D.C. 20017
Phone: (202) 526-0251, Fax: (202) 526-1934
communionenewsletter@gmail.com