



SSS Grapevine

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Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for the
Eymardian Family

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Pastoral Visit to Catholic Theological Union – April 24-27, 2023



*CTU Academic Center in Hyde Park area of
the south side of Chicago*

Since 1983, the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament has been a corporate member of Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago, the largest graduate school for theology and ministry in the USA. There are almost 300 students, 75% lay students, and the others seminarians for different religious orders. It comprises 23 male religious orders, which constitute the “union.” There are other religious orders of men (not part of the union), women, diocesan seminarians, and laity who are part of the community as well. Since its founding in 1968, it has led in theological, scripture,

ecclesiological, and liturgical studies, with faculty who “write the books” for the world community and research. A

highlight of CTU has international faculty and students who share their culture and perspectives, reminding us that the Church is catholic – universal – and we are called to minister to a world Church.

CTU prepares us well! I am a proud graduate, as are many of our religious who have attended since we joined. Each year in April, a Board of Trustees is composed of 23 corporate members and 21 lay leaders in the Church.

The first days were devoted to Trustee meetings and talks sharing the current and new initiatives part of CTU. When CTU sold one of its buildings in 2019, it put the graduate school in a vital financial safety net and path to keep it a strong school of ministry and make CTU a place for cutting-edge theology, ministry, and leadership for the

Church's future. One of the exciting new initiatives is named and funded by the Congregation of the Precious Blood and its famous theologian, who died recently, Fr. Robert Schreiter, CPPS. He was a leader in reconciliation, justice, and peace initiatives. The new center, devoted to his name and honor, hired a new director who was falsely accused and incarcerated for 23 years but released after a justice project. A new director of the Center for the Study of Consecrated (*Religious*) Life also helps the Church know, experience, and learn the importance of religious life in the Church. This institute also provides training for formators and classes in spirituality in the different religious order traditions.

While CTU started with three male religious orders in 1968, a new juncture was voted upon at this meeting, with three seminaries now coming together to utilize the CTU Academic Center. (*This building was constructed for 600 students.*) The trustees and corporation member board approved a plan for the Lutheran School of Theology to lease and add to the CTU building and include its 100 students and faculty in the building's life. Additionally, the board and corporation members approved the lease of the McCormack School of Theology. This smaller graduate school was nearby, to now move into the building for the Fall semester. The corporation members voted in favor of the first balanced budget in CTU's history, even before these two new leases of the CTU property. This is an exciting time, for the tuition does not have to be



Logo Wall with SSS Logo on top left

raised. Furthermore, religious orders like ours that present with international students take advantage of a special scholarship whereby we receive third-off credits of \$700 an hour. These two additional pieces of income will give long-term sustenance to CTU.



Mr. Bryan Stevenson

Annually, CTU celebrates a unique benefit for the school called “Blessed Are the Peacemakers,” whereby we honor those who have made a significant contribution to our world through their witness of faith, showing that they are peacemakers. Trustees nominate those trying to end violence and hatred who show how to love enemies and build up our world. This year, Dr. Donna Carrol, the former president of Dominican University, received a special service award for her 27 years of leadership there and in the association of

Catholic higher education. She is known for expanding the reach of education for students of color, her pledge to close the equity gap in higher education, and her focus on education as a force for social mobility. Mr. Bryan Stevenson was honored with the Peacemaker Award for his faith-rooted activism as

Founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice initiative. His initiatives have been well documented in his award-winning book, which was also turned into a movie, *Just Mercy*, where he helps the poor, incarcerated, and condemned, sometimes unjustly. This was the largest banquet, with 425 attending to support our theologate.



Peter & Allison Harley with me

Besides the board meetings and banquet, the highlight of this weekly meeting is always meeting classmates and new members who inspire me with their work in the Church, their religious order, and their hopes to expand their ministry. I met for lunch with

one of my classmates, Bishop Christopher Glancy CSV, who now serves the Victorian Center for Reintegrating Young Adult Refugees. He was ordained the bishop of Belize City a few years back and returned to his native Chicago. Also, I met for lunch with our former religious Peter Harley and his wife, Allison, who administer the Aquinas Literacy Center (*sponsored by the Adrian Dominican Sisters*) near the former SSS parish in Chicago's McKinley Park. Having a lunch break with them and hearing their exciting ministry and stories inspired us to realize that CTU makes a difference in training us for ministry and encourages us to be our best for evangelizing and serving the Gospel.

We look forward to USA immigration approving our two Vietnamese SSS students attending CTU online from our Highland Heights Community soon. (*60% of CTU's students attend class online.*) Stay tuned for more information when they arrive! Pray that it may be quickly. And I thank Sister Barbara Reid OP, president of CTU, and the Dominican Community of Oak Park for their hospitality during this stay. We pray for other vocations to join our Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament to experience our seminary CTU.



Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

5384 Wilson Mills Road

Cleveland, Ohio 44143

ssscommunications@blessedsacrament.com

(440) 442-6311