



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**University of St. Thomas to Host the
2009 Young Social Justice Institute Summer Conference
“Poverty in the USA & Abroad”**

Houston (January 15 2008) – On June 4-5, 2009, the Rev. William J. Young Social Justice Conference will focus upon “Poverty in the USA and Abroad.” Building upon the national campaign by Catholic Charities USA, “Poverty in America,” the Conference, through keynote speakers and breakout sessions, will examine the persistence of poverty in the United States as well as the poverty begat by structural inequalities in the global economy. The growing impact of the current worldwide economic depression will be an integral part of the discussion.

Keynote speakers include, **Prof. David O’Brien**, College of the Holy Cross; **Rev. Larry Snyder**, Catholic Charities USA, and **Rev. Rafael Lopera, CSB** of the Basilian Community in Colombia.

O’Brien will speak on “The U.S. Bishops’ 1919 Program of Social Construction: Back to the Future.” Given it’s the 90th anniversary of this document, O’Brien, a historian, will address the importance of this document, both in terms of how many of its ideas were incorporated in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal and how this document represents the emergence of the U.S. Bishops as a key national public policy interlocutor. O’Brien will also address the relevance of the unfulfilled aspects of the document for the poverty issues that we face today.

Rev. Snyder will address the reality of widespread poverty in the United States and how the national campaign by Catholic Charities USA seeks to address them. Attendees of this lecture will be provided with ample information to take back to their respective locales on the dimensions of poverty that need to be addressed and how to do so.

Rev. Lopera, bringing an international perspective to the proceedings, will focus on the Basilian efforts on education in the developing world. Rev. Lopera’s talk in particular will have a pastoral focus that should inspire attendees to put forth their best efforts post-conference to address the poverty issue.

In addition to these empowering speakers, breakout sessions will be offered on such topics as: **Poverty & Education, Empowering Volunteers, Affordable Housing, Poverty and the Elderly, Breaking the Cycle of Poverty, Rehabilitative Justice, Microcredit Enterprises, Poverty and Family Values, A Just Tax Policy, and Poverty and Spirituality.** Presenters of these breakout sessions include University of St. Thomas faculty, and administrators and activists from the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston and Catholic Charities-Houston/Galveston.

On both days, the afternoon sessions will feature roundtable discussions on poverty with the keynote speakers and breakout presenters. Reports from the respective Catholic lobby groups at the national, state, and local levels will chart how attendees can choose to get involved to pursue the resolution of these poverty issues. In addition to local Catholic leaders, representatives from Catholic Relief Services; the Catholic Worker Movement; Pax Christi and NETWORK, the national Catholic social justice lobby, are expected to participate in these vital discussions. His eminence, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo will serve as the celebrant to the closing liturgy for the conference.

The conference should be of particular interest to any one working in social justice activism or educational ministry. Continuing education credits will be available. For registration materials, housing information, and any other queries regarding the conference, contact Deborah Fernandez at the Young Institute at fernanda@stthom.edu or 713-525-3812.