

Illuminations

A Newsletter for Theology & Religious Studies Graduate Students at John Carroll University

<http://www.jcu.edu/religion/>

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The Walter & Mary Tuohy Lecture Series Welcomes Fr. Thomas Michel, SJ

Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, Father Thomas Michel was ordained a Catholic priest in 1967 in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Shortly afterwards, the bishop of the diocese received a request from a bishop in Indonesia for a priest come and teach English at the seminary there. Fr. Michel was sent to Indonesia, where he stayed for a while. It was then that Fr. Michel decided to become a Jesuit. While he was teaching English at a teachers' college in Indonesia, Muslim students there suggested that he consider studying Islam in order to help Christians and Muslims understand one another better.

Fr. Michel left Indonesia for Lebanon and Egypt where he studied Islam and Arabic. He finished his doctoral degree at the University of Chicago and went back to Indonesia where he began teaching Christian theology to Muslims and Islamic theology to Christians. He then received word that the Vatican was looking for someone with a background in Islam for the Pontifical Council of Interreligious Dialogue and his superiors sent him to the Vatican to be in charge of relations with Muslims. He moved to Rome and worked at the Vatican for 13 years while also teaching courses on Christian theology at a Muslim University in Angora, Turkey. He retired from that position in 2008 and went to live permanently in Turkey where he continued to teach and help out in a local Catholic parish.

Father Michel's Tuohy Lecture Series schedule is on page 3 of this newsletter. His unique perspective as both Catholic priest and lover of Islam makes him an excellent practitioner of the Tuohy Chair's goal of inter-religious dialogue. We look forward to his sharing his experience with us.



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Fr. Thomas Michel (continued)

What led you to become a Jesuit?

I knew that I wanted to stay permanently in Indonesia and wanted to fit into an ongoing community of people trying to do the same thing I was – living their Christian life in community. That is why I wanted to join the Jesuit order. I also worked as the Executive Secretary for the Office of Interreligious and Ecumenical Affairs in Bangkok for the Asian bishops and as Secretary for Interreligious Dialogue for the Jesuits in Rome.

What kind of perspective do you think you have as a Catholic Priest studying Islam?

I think the advantage that I've had in my life is to be able to live with Muslims and see Islam from the inside. In many places that I've lived, including Turkey, Malaysia, and the Middle East, I was the only Christian out of all of my neighbors, students, and teachers. I was living as part of their community, but I was living as a Christian.

What sort of projects and research are you working on now?

My doctoral thesis was entitled "Ibn Taymiyya's Al-Jawab al-Sahih: A Muslim Theologian's Critique of Christianity." But in recent years, I've spent a lot of time studying and writing about modern Turkish thinkers, especially ones who are committed to dialogue with Christians. Earlier, when I was writing only for Christians, I always wrote about Christian theology and dialogue.

How did you end up at John Carroll University?

I don't really remember how I heard of the opportunity. I spent a year as a fellow at Georgetown University a couple years ago and that is the only other experience I have had with American Jesuit universities.

What are you looking forward to most while at John Carroll?

I am looking forward to the lecture series, of course, but I'm also looking forward to getting to know more about Cleveland and the people of Cleveland. I've already met with various Christian and Muslim groups in Cleveland.

What do you hope that students and participants in your lecture series gain?

I hope they will gain some of the really positive attitude that I have gained about Muslims and Islam over the last forty years. I hope some will wash off. And that I can communicate the love that I have for Muslims to the students.

What advice do you have for current graduate students?

Try to balance what you are learning in the textbooks with a personal effort to get to know people of different faiths and understand their experiences.

Fall 2011 Tuohy Lecture Series

Muslims Meeting Christians: Aspects of the Encounter

Rev. Thomas Michel, S.J.

All meetings are in the Donahue Auditorium of the Dolan Science Center at 7:30 pm

OCTOBER 11 – Christians in Muslim-Majority Regions: Focus on Indonesia and Turkey

The speaker, a Jesuit priest of the Indonesia Province, will draw from his experience to present, compare, and contrast the minority Catholic communities in two predominantly Muslim countries and their relations with Muslim majority.

OCTOBER 18 – The Trinity as Radical Monotheism

Jews and Muslims often suspect that the Christian belief in the Trinity is a departure from genuine Abrahamic monotheism. This talk will attempt to show that, properly understood, the Christian doctrine is actually a radicalization of monotheist faith.

OCTOBER 25 – The Dynamism of Neo-Sufi Movements Today: Nursi and Gulen

Two of the most dynamic movements in the Islamic community today are those inspired by Said Nursi and Fethullah Gulen. Promoting the values of love, peace, and tolerance, these movements are committed to oppose “humanity’s true enemies”: ignorance, poverty, and disunity.

NOVEMBER 1 – Muslim-Christian Encounter as Agent of Peacebuilding

Vatican II has called on Muslims and Christians to work together to build peace. This talk aims at giving concrete examples, drawn from the speaker’s experience, of the ways that this is actually being done in various parts of the world.

NOVEMBER 8 – Reading the Qur’an with Christian Eyes

Is it permissible for a Christian to read the Sacred Book, such as the Qur’an, of another religion? What lessons and new insights might a Christian gain from reading the Qur’an? This talk will examine the theological issue and also offer practical advice.

NOVEMBER 15 – A Catholic Priest among Muslims: What I’ve Learned in These Years

The speaker is a Catholic priest who has spent over 40 years living and working with Muslims. In this talk, he will attempt to share some of the things he has learned in these years.

In the Know: This Year's Graduate Assistants



Shannon Edwards

Shannon is a second year graduate assistant presently working on her Master's essay on John Wesley's promotion of social justice. In her free time, she volunteers as a Sunday school teacher and teen leader for her church. Shannon would like to become a writer, especially for a Christian publishing house, but is open to wherever life leads her. Her favorite part of John Carroll has been getting to know the other graduate assistants and doing research and editing for her professors' book projects.

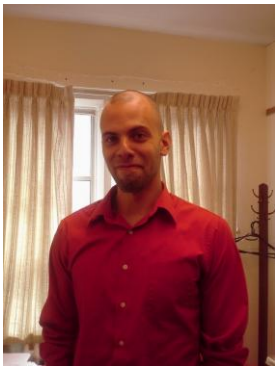
Kristen Pungitore

Kristen is a first year graduate assistant who comes to us from Pittsburgh. She graduated last year from Westminster College with a degree in Religious Studies and Communications and looks forward to learning all she can while at John Carroll. Kristen enjoys Biblical Studies and she thinks that she would like to teach one day. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, going to concerts, cooking new things, and cheering on the Pittsburgh Steelers.



Jared Ward

Jared Ward is entering his second year as a Graduate Assistant in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. He graduated in 2009 with a BA in religious studies from Hiram College. Jared's interests are primarily in religion, culture and languages of Asia. This past summer he participated in the Woodenfish Buddhism in China program in China's Sichuan province aimed at fostering a better understanding of Buddhism in China. Upon completion of the MA at JCU he hopes to gain a Ph.D in religion or a cognate discipline. In his spare time he anxiously awaits a Cleveland sports championship, and enjoys spending time with family, watching movies, cooking and engaging in outdoor activities with his girlfriend.



Jurell Sison

Jurell Sison is a new graduate assistant from Parma Heights, Ohio and a graduate of John Carroll University, having studied English literature and theology. After graduating, he ventured off to Michigan to teach at Detroit Cristo Rey High School, through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Jurell intends to focus his studies on scripture and theology. He is a resident minister with JCU Campus Ministry, serving as a pastoral presence to first year students in the residence halls. In the future, Jurell hopes to teach young adults in high school and/or college, expanding their knowledge but also guiding them to serve others. Along with teaching and ministry, Jurell also hopes to become a successful entrepreneur. In his spare time, Jurell is a praise and worship leader and an advisor for Beta Theta Pi Fraternity. He loves reading, journaling, traveling, photography, and anything that has to do with food/cooking.



Important Dates to Remember – Fall 2011

From The Graduate Studies Office (CAS):

October 19	Thesis/Essay Writing Workshop: Contact Graduate Studies Office for details
October 28	Spring 2012 registration opens for graduate students
November 21	Last day to submit essay or thesis for winter graduation
November 22	Last day to withdraw from courses
November 28	Last day to apply formally for May 2012 graduation
November 28	Last day for submission of comps for winter graduation

Upcoming Lectures:

Thursday, October 6 at 7 pm

Timothy Radcliffe, OP, "Where Do I Find Hope?"

11th Annual Margaret F. Grace Lecture, sponsored by The Cardinal Suenens Center
Donahue Auditorium, Dolan Science Center

Tuesdays, October 11 through November 15

Thomas Michel, SJ, Tuohy Lecture Series

"Muslims Meeting Christians: Aspects of the Encounter"

See details above on page 3.

Wednesday, October 12 at noon

Jimmy Menkhaus, "Bagging Ignatius: Pedro Arrupe: A Spirituality of Solidarity"

Sponsored by Office of University Mission and Identity
Campus Ministry Conference Room
Bring your lunch; beverages and cookies provided

Thursday, October 20 at 7 pm

John E. Thiel, Ph.D, President, The Catholic Theological Society of America, "Imagining Ourselves in Heaven"

The Dolores L. Christie Lecture Series Inaugural Event

Sponsored by the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, The Office of University Mission and identity
and the Catholic Theological Society of America
Donahue Auditorium, Dolan Science Center

Monday, October 24 & Tuesday, October 25

Symposium on Challenges to Contemporary Islam:

"The Muslim World 100 Years after Nursi's Damascus Sermon"

Sponsored by the Nursi Chair in Islamic Studies

For details, see the website: <http://sites.jcu.edu/nursichair/> or contact nursi@jcu.edu or 216-397-6279

Thursday, November 3 at 7:30 pm

Michael Simone, SJ, "Images of God as Fire in the Hebrew Bible"

Sponsored by the Institute of Catholic Studies
LSC Conference Room

