THE

BOISI CENTER REPORT

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings to all of our old and new friends of the Boisi Center. Part of my great pleasure during the past four months has been the opportunity to meet many talented people connected with one of Boston College's most esteemed interdisciplinary centers. I owe both Erik Owens, Boisi's talented associate director, and Susan Richard, Boisi's wonderful administrative assistant, large debts of gratitude for helping me to step into the large shoes left by Alan Wolfe, my esteemed predecessor in the director's position. Our new graduate assistant, Jack Nuelle (a graduate student at BC's School of Theology and Ministry) has likewise made my entry into the director's position a surprisingly smooth one. So to all three of these people I make my heart-felt and public "thank you."

It also helped that I moved into the Boisi Center after a wonderful sabbatical year, during which I finished a monograph that I had been thinking about for some time. That monograph will be published this coming spring by Oxford University Press as *The Structure of Theological Revolutions: How Debates Over Humanae Vitae Changed American Catholic Theology*. That sabbatical was a welcome respite of reading and writing after six fruitful years of serving as dean of the School of Theology and Ministry at Boston College, and provided a wonderful bridge between one BC identity and my new one. Lots of people to thank for that year, but I'd rather do that in person when I meet you at one of the Boisi Center events this year.

And there has been a plethora of well-attended events marked by great conversation and exciting ideas this past fall. Two of our larger events were offered to mark important cultural episodes: On September 26, we hosted a lively panel discussion entitled "The Challenge of Charlottesville: Race, Religion, and Public Monuments," during which four of BC's professors opened a spirited conversation about the public meaning of monuments in the U.S., and then broadened the conversation by engaging questions from the audience. Likewise, on October 11 we hosted a day-long conference entitled "Land O' Lakes at 50: The State of Catholic Higher Education." That event marked the 50th anniversary of the "Land O' Lakes" statement, widely considered to be the founding document of modern Catholic higher education. Panelists included seven sitting university presidents, as well as academics and public intellectuals from around the country.

In addition to these two events, the Boisi Center co-sponsored an international conference between November 7 and 10 entitled "Educating for Modern Democracy," organized by our smart colleague in the philosophy department, Jeff Bloechl. Public intellectuals of the stature of José Casanova, David Campbell, and Eduardo Mendieta took part in the various panels spread over four days, and both Erik and I served as conveners for several of the panel discussions.

The Boisi Center has also inaugurated a faculty seminar (made up of professors from philosophy, political science, the Law School, theology, African and African Diaspora Studies, and history) entitled "What Does Citizenship Mean in America Today?" The seminar meets once a month over a tasty lunch to discuss a common text assigned by the rotating convener, which means that we are all reading important and thoughtful works outside our areas of expertise, a rare and wonderful experience of transcending the academic silos so common in the world of higher education.

A series of wonderful lunch speakers has marked our semester: lunch conversations focused on topics as different as "What's So Political About 'Political Islam'?," "Luther in America," and "What's Wrong with the New Genealogy of Religious Freedom?" A film screening of *RIKERS: AN AMERICAN JAIL*, followed by a robust conversation with many members of a large audience, made for a lively evening. And as if that were not enough, the Boisi Center hosted an International Summit of Centers on Religion and Public Life here at BC on November 16, at which close to 40 center directors from the U.S. and Europe met for an all-afternoon series of discussions about what unites us and what makes us different and unique.

It has, to understate it a bit, been a busy and exciting fall. We look forward to seeing you at our coming spring events.

-Mark Massa, S.J.

LAND O' LAKES AT 50

THE STATE OF CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

University of Notre Dame historian John T. McGreevy gives the day's first keynote lecture.

On October 11, the Boisi Center hosted "Land O' Lakes at 50: The State of Higher Education." This conference, co-sponsored with The Institute for the Liberal Arts, Office of the Dean of Morrissey College of the Arts and Sciences, and the Office of the Provost and Dean of Faculties, marked the 50th anniversary of the seminal document, signed in 1967 by a group of Catholic educators and religious leaders, that outlined a new understanding of relations between Catholic universities and the Church hierarchy in areas including governance, academic freedom, and academic theology. A dozen distinguished panelists—including seven sitting presidents of Catholic universities—gathered to discuss this influential and controversial document. Keynote addresses were given by University of Notre Dame historian John T. McGreevy and Boston College president William P. Leahy, S.J.

The morning's keynote address was given by John T. McGreevy, I. A. O'Shaughnessy Dean of the College of Arts and Letters at the University of Notre Dame. McGreevy noted three concurrent shifts within Catholic higher education that contextualize the Land O' Lakes statement. First, the influence of Vatican II and the papal encyclical *Gaudium et Spes* cannot be understated. Just as Pope Paul VI called for the Catholic Church to engage the modern world, the Land O' Lakes statement called for Catholic universities to modernize. The alternative to modernization, the argument went, was mediocrity.

Second, Catholic universities were increasingly turning to lay governance and faculty consultation regarding curriculum. While seeking to preserve their distinctive charisms, the attendees recognized that college faculty, many of whom had neither attended a Catholic university nor worked at one previously, held greater allegiance to their academic disciplines than to the Church.

Third, the Land O' Lakes meeting was but one of many such gatherings convened around the world. Similar meetings in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines, and France resulted in similar documents that would establish the vitality of Catholic education, especially in what was then called the "Third World," now the "Global South."

During a question and answer session, audience members raised issues of the document's reach and the make-up of the Land O' Lakes meeting's attendees. McGreevy suggested that the document itself was of modest significance because it was vague, but its drafting began a wider movement to strengthen the vision of American Catholic higher education.

The first panel, moderated by James O'Toole, the Clough Millennium Chair in History at Boston College, reflected the changing demographics of Catholic university leadership. The panel's discussion focused on some of the institutional changes facing the administrations of Catholic colleges and universities. John Jenkins, C.S.C., president of the University of Notre Dame, started by describing the complexity of running a modern institution of higher learning and the necessity of lay leadership. Le Moyne College president Linda LeMura noted that Le Moyne faces competition from new tuition-free state schools in New York. She warned her peers that free education will come sooner or later to the whole nation, and Catholic institutions must demonstrate what they add that Public Ivies do not. Sean Sheridan, TOR, president of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, noted a revitalization of Franciscan University's heritage in recent years, which helped define what it means to be both Catholic and Franciscan. Michael Hemesath, president of St. John's University in Minnesota noted that the school stresses its Benedictine roots despite an increasingly lay faculty. To this end, all of

Boston College president William P. Leahy, S.J. delivers the final keynote lecture.

the panelists spoke to the distinctive curricula of Catholic education and Catholic social teachings, the formations of students, and mission-oriented hiring. Journalist and author Peter Steinfels noted the exchange of quantity for quality of theological education.

The second panel was moderated by Erik Owens, associate director of the Boisi Center, and associate professor of the practice of theology. This panel addressed the role of the university as "critical reflective intelligence" and the Catholic intellectual tradition. Gregory Kalscheur, S.J., dean of the Boston College Morrissey College of the Arts and Sciences, stressed the Catholic focus on the education of the whole person and respecting the human dignity of students. Brian Linnane, S.J., president of Loyola University Maryland, praised the university as a place which can examine and regenerate the Church in response to its public failings. The panelists also expressed some anxiety regarding the state of Catholic intellectuals. Massimo Faggioli, professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University, brought a European perspective, noting that Europe is grappling with a Catholic intellectualism dangerously influenced by a far right political vision. Margaret O'Brien Steinfels commented that university autonomy has distanced the bishops from the intellectual centers of Catholicism; few bishops have experience with the academic freedom or rigorous theological inquiry that characterize higher education. To this point, St. Anselm College president Steven DiSalvo stressed the importance of regular communication between colleges and the local bishops.

William P. Leahy, S.J., president of Boston College, gave a concluding keynote address, which examined the legacy of the Land O' Lakes statement, most readily visible in its use in later documents, notably *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*.

Following Father Leahy's keynote, the sitting presidents returned for an extended question and answer session. Audience members raised issues of the cost of Catholic education. One attendee, whose four children all attended Catholic colleges, expressed appreciation for the commitment to academic excellence and Catholic values.

www.bc.edu/boisi-landolakes

(Top, from left to right) Panelists Sean Sheridan, TOR; Linda LeMura; Peter Steinfels; John Jenkins, C.S.C.; Michael Hemesath; and moderator James O'Toole. (Bottom, from left to right) Steven DiSalvo; Massimo Faggioli; Gregory Kalscheur, S.J.; Brian Linnane, S.J.; Margaret O'Brien Steinfels; moderator Erik Owens is not pictured.

THE CHALLENGE OF CHARLOTTESVILLE: RACE, RELIGION, AND PUBLIC MONUMENTS

BC professors and community members came together to discuss the role of public monuments in a post-Charlottesville world.

On September 26, a group of distinguished Boston College scholars discussed the role of public monuments in the wake of the violent clashes between white nationalists and counterprotestors in Charlottesville, Virginia the previous month. The event was co-sponsored by the departments of theology, history, and African and African Diaspora Studies.

Each panelist engaged the symbolism of public monuments and considered arguments for and against removing those which honored historical figures associated with slavery and racism.

The first issue discussed was the significance of public monuments. Professor of theology and African and African Diaspora Studies (AADS), Shawn Copeland, began her analysis with a historical fact: the majority of Confederacy-related statues were erected after the Civil War, between 1890 and 1920. Thus, in her estimation, these memorials attempt to reinstate normative anachronisms. Martin Summers, professor of history and AADS, also argued along those lines. In his view, a statue's meaning is dynamic. While memorials can initially be concordant with social norms, they can soon become discordant with prevailing perspectives. Using her knowledge of the institutional history of Christianity, Patricia DeLeeuw, professor emerita of theology, considered the removal of Lee's statue an "iconoclasm," like those of the Protestant Reformation. Overall, as moderator Mark Massa, S.J., added, these memorials prompt the onlooker to reconsider the United States' civil religion and founding myth.

(from left to right) Mark Massa, S.J., Martin Summers, Heather Cox Richardson, M. Shawn Copeland, Patricia DeLeeuw, Craig Ford, Jr.

The panelists then shifted their attention to the arguments made by those who oppose the removal of Robert E. Lee's memorial in Charlottesville. Such contentions criticize the withdrawal of Confederate statues as historical erasure.

In response, theological ethics doctoral candidate Craig Ford, Jr. differentiated "the past" from "history." Whereas the former is objectively unchanging, the latter is subjective because it is an interpretation of past events. Ford noted that American history has seldom considered the plight of poor, undocumented, and non-white people; therefore, to topple Lee's statue is to afford such marginalized communities the rare opportunity to influence dominant historiographies. An instructive model for grappling with such a harrowing past, DeLeeuw insisted, is Germany's commemoration of the Holocaust.

The panelists also assessed the role of participatory democracy in the discourse on public memorials. Heather Cox Richardson, professor of history, stressed that the decision to erect, relocate, or remove a monument must originate in informed, open public debate. Such colloquia, Richardson urged, should work to construct a "new American past," one that borrows from liberation theology, theories of intersectional oppression, and Enlightenment principles.

www.bc.edu/boisi-charlottesville

WHAT'S SO POLITICAL ABOUT 'POLITICAL' ISLAM?

David DiPasquale offered questions about the problems of approaching Islam through a Western liberal lens.

David DiPasquale, assistant professor of the practice of political science at Boston College, studies the intersection between Islamic law and political thought in pre-modern and contemporary contexts. In a September 12 lunch lecture at the Boisi Center, he brought this focus to bear on the question: "What do we mean when we call Islam 'political'?" He contended that placing the word 'political' in front of Islam is an unhelpful and distorting Western bias.

DiPasquale highlighted how in Islam, humanity is seen as inherently political. However, with the beginning of the Enlightenment in the 17th century, writers such as Benedict de Spinoza and Thomas Hobbes began to articulate worldviews that cast 'political' as an unnatural concept. DiPasquale then argued that when 'political' is used to describe Islam, it is used to distance Islam from this Western post-Enlightenment view. If politics are somehow unnatural to society, then politics are certainly unnatural to religious belief and practice.

This, DiPasquale outlined, contributes to how the West understands the "public" versus "private" sphere. In Islam, there is no private sphere; "God is closer to you than your jugular." Indeed, Sharia, an Islamic legal code introduced in the seventh century, seeks to manage the everyday lives of Muslims in a manner that is widely seen as 'political' today. So, DiPasquale concluded, when Western understandings of Islam take on the language of "Islamism," Islam becomes a monolithic human ideology in the same vein as communism, and must be "cured" by liberal ideals.

In the question and answer session that followed, audience members wondered about the implicit and explicit contributions of political thought on religious teaching across religious traditions.

www.bc.edu/boisi-dipasquale

David DiPasquale (center) during his lecture.

RIKERS: AN AMERICAN JAIL

BC professors Stephen Pope and Marina McCoy discussed Bill Moyers' award winning documentary alongside Tom Lynes and Joli Sparkman, who shared stories and experiences from their time in the Massachusetts Department of Corrections.

Bill Moyers' documentary *RIKERS: AN AMERICAN JAIL* features accounts from several former Rikers Island inmates who discuss the various forms of abuse and inhumane treatment they faced during their incarceration in one of the U.S.'s most notorious jails. On October 23, the Boisi Center screened the film in advance of a panel discussion about America's mass incarceration system and the religious and personal aspects of restorative justice. The panel was comprised of Boston College professor of philosophy Marina McCoy and professor of theology Stephen Pope; and Joli Sparkman and Tom Lynes, former inmates of the Massachusetts Department of Corrections; with Erik Owens moderating. The evening was co-sponored with the department of theology.

Lynes began the panel by discussing the abusive family history that preceded the murder he committed and the subsequent twenty-five years he spent in prison. Because of his abusive upbringing, he developed a deep anger

that he was never able to learn to control. It was only when he found his faith, thanks to the help of Dominican Sister Ruth Rachel, that he was able to learn to be more compassionate and loving. His time in prison was riddled with difficulties, including long periods of solitary confinement, but Lynes said his newly strengthened faith guided him to the realization that he was put on this earth to be something more than just a criminal and inmate.

Sparkman followed Lynes recounting the challenges she faced growing up in an abusive household and being forced into sex trafficking as a young adult. She eventually faced an eighteen year prison sentence after being involved in an exchange that led to a murder. She recounted the ways in which her time in prison made her feel so hopeless that she contemplated, and eventually attempted, suicide. Sparkman shared a journal entry about one of her suicide attempts while in solitary confinement. She described the humiliating ways the correctional officers dealt with the event and the lack of concern that was shown for her mental health. Her saving grace, she claims, was her therapist, who helped her find happiness for the first time.

McCoy and Pope, who have both participated in prison ministry for many years, shared their insights on the corruptive nature of the system following these stories. McCoy described the ways in which mercy must take more of an active role in our society. Pope described the corrupt system as one that "systematically humiliates people then punishes them for being enraged about it." The closing sentiment was that the current system is one that leaves many without hope, or even desire, for rehabilitation. It must be reformed so that it becomes one that heals.

www.bc.edu/boisi-rikers

LUTHER IN AMERICA

Christine Helmer, Northwestern University professor of history, and 2017-18 Corcoran Visiting Chair in Christian-Jewish Relations at the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College, discussed American Luther scholarship.

Christine Helmer (center) addresses her audience.

On Thursday, October 5, 2017, the Boisi Center hosted Christine Helmer, a visiting scholar from Northwestern University, for a lunch lecture entitled "Luther in America."

In her presentation, Helmer outlined the history of American study of Luther. This included an explanation of the renewed focus on Luther's Catholicism and current studies engaging Luther from modern perspectives.

Helmer recalled how the "Catholic Luther" approach became a new and revealing way to engage Luther. It became a prominent current in Luther scholarship after the work of George Lindbeck, who took an ecumenical and incorporative approach to Luther, that focused on Luther's role as an Augustinian Catholic friar trained in theology and heavily indebted to medieval philosophy.

Helmer carefully laid out why this American-led effort is important and where it is heading. The main effect of this focus is to take Luther to task for his consistent and often virulent anti-Judaism. Helmer drew attention to the work of Susannah Heschel, who has focused, in her own work, on the Nazi use of Luther as well as how central anti-Jewish sentiment was to his project. Helmer concluded by detailing how studies of Luther that do not take Nazi co-option of Luther and Luther's own anti-Judaism into account miss a central and important aspect of Luther's theological and historical significance.

www.bc.edu/boisi-helmer

RESPONDING TO THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS AT BC AND BEYOND

During the week of November 13, the Boisi Center hosted a series of events about the global refugee crisis.

The world is currently facing the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II, with 65 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, including 23 million refugees. How will we respond?

During International Education Week 2017, the Boisi Center convened a series of interactive events to educate and inspire the BC community to take action.

On November 13, the Boisi Center co-sponsored a dinner for approximately 75 students with the Office of International Programs. The dinner featured two BC experts, Westy Egmont, founder of the Boston College School of Social Work's Immigrant Integration Lab, and Kristin E. Heyer, professor of theology; and two refugees who have resettled to the Boston area, Rodrigue Kalambye (from the Congo) and Rafal Thaher (from Iraq).

Together, Egmont and Heyer introduced the current refugee crisis and discussed models of corrective engagement. Kalambye and Thaher then shared their stories of migration from the Congo and Iraq, respectively, and their resettlement to Boston.

During the rest of the week, BC community members were given the opportunity to engage with the Refugee Portal, a gold shipping container with a full sized video screen and video link to refugee camps in Erbil, Iraq, Amman, Jordan, and Berlin, Germany. This afforded the opportunity for real conversations to happen in real time between BC and these refugee communities, putting a face to the crisis and building community across the globe.

The "Refugee Project" was a collaboration with colleagues at the Harvard Divinity School, the American Academy of Religion and Shared Studios, with funding from the Henry Luce Foundation. The project was in the Boston area from November 4-20, 2017.

www.bc.edu/boisi-refugeeproject

Inside the refugee portal.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE NEW GENEALOGY OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM?

David Decosimo spoke on the critiques of religious freedom and offered suggestions for its rehabilitation.

During a November 2 luncheon colloquium at the Boisi Center, Boston University School of Theology professor David Decosimo spoke on the New Genealogy of Religious Freedom (NGRF), challenging its assumptions and offering a constructive illustration of what religious freedom can be.

Decosimo outlined what he calls the New Genealogy of Religious Freedom's critique of religious freedom itself. The NGRF states that religious freedom is unstable, impossible, and systematically biased against religions that are not compatible with liberal Protestantism. It further argues that religious freedom is employed as a tool of oppression and neo-colonialism, and it generates new forms of religious prejudice, thus facilitating hegemony of powerful geopolitical actors.

Decosimo explained the main currents of NGRF's critique of religious freedom, which confronts religious freedom as it is commonly used when instrumentalized by institutions. NRGF contends that eligious freedom is inherently dominative, and this domination limits freedom and perpetuates a destructive system of power. While NGRF has criticized religious freedom as a tool of control for the state and secular power, Decosimo's evaluation of religious freedom highlights how understanding the rhetorical abuse of religious freedom can be constructive in realizing more ideal societies.

David Decosimo addresses a lunchtime crowd at the Boisi Center.

Decosimo's approach to religious freedom views freedom as a non-dominating force, in conjunction with an understanding that not all power asymmetries need to be oppressive. In order to move forward with a comprehensive understanding of religious freedom, Decosimo argues that we must reject the assumptions that are implicit in the NGRF, in order to see religious freedom as a constructive process that creates a dialectical and democratic vision of freedom. We must reject a foundationalist understanding of religious freedom that seeks to create religious homogeneity in political society.

During a discussion following his talk, Decosimo engaged with questions of historical genealogies of religious freedom, arguing that although these histories often reveal darkness and domination, examining them honestly will reveal possibilities for future civic friendship and even love.

www.bc.edu/boisi-decosimo

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF CENTERS ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE

The Boisi Center opened new avenues of communication to create more opportunities for collaboration among centers for religion and public life.

Over the past three decades, a small ecosystem of centers for "religion and public life" has developed among colleges and universities in the U.S. and around the world. Beyond a shared underlying mission to study religion in public life and to enhance the public understanding of religion in some way, these centers vary widely in mission, scope, size, name, and institutional setting, and they rarely collaborate with one another. A small group of leaders in such centers began to talk last year about the need for better communication and collaboration, in part out of a sense that their public mission might need to expand in response to rising levels of religious illiteracy and intolerance. In November, the Boisi Center took the conversation a step further by hosting an international summit of centers for religion and public life—the first of its kind.

Convening a day before the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Boston, the half-day summit brought together thirty-five leaders from twenty-five centers in the United States and Europe, plus several members of the AAR's Committee on the Public Understanding of Religion (which Boisi Center associate director Erik Owens chairs). Fifteen additional centers around the world had joined this group in an inaugural survey of such centers but were not able to send representatives to the summit.

After welcoming remarks from Boisi Center director Mark Massa, S.J., and summit steering committee co-chair Marie Griffiths, director of the Danforth Center on Religion and Politics at Washington University in St. Louis, Owens highlighted key survey findings about the centers' histories (from 1995 to 2000 the number of centers rose from 7 to 20, and have steadily climbed since then to the fifty Owens surveyed), institutional settings (centers are diversely situated within diverse institutions, two-thirds of which are not religiously affiliated), size (most are small in size and draw primarily from university operating budgets, not endowments), and public engagement (all the centers engage publics outside the academy, and most have collaborated at least once with other academic centers and/or advocacy groups).

Erik Owens addresses the gathered directors of almost 40 centers of religion and public life.

Distinguished scholars David Gushee, director of the Center for Theology and Public Life at Mercer University, and Laurie Patton, president of Middlebury College, the elected presidents of the AAR in 2018 and 2019, respectively, then addressed the Summit. Gushee urged participants to cluster resources to work for greater public understanding of religion, and to consider this new network as a crucial means to influence the work of the AAR and other institutions. Patton urged participants to help create, define and expand "canons of excellence" that describe best practices for teaching and scholarship on the public understanding of religion, something that graduate students in particular are hungry to receive. Both speakers called for more scholarly writing "in the space between research and punditry," as Patton put it, and both speakers revealed that the central themes of the next two AAR annual meetings will focus on the public understanding of religion.

After a discussion period, participants split into breakout groups to discuss practical issues around three core themes: engaging diverse publics (including discussion of mission and the role of advocacy); making a center's work possible (institutional setting, funding opportunities/challenges, and metrics for success); and avenues of possible collaboration among centers.

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For complete information and resources on all of our events, including audio and video recordings, transcripts, interviews, photos, videos, bibliographies and more, visit our website: www.bc.edu/boisi.

Unless otherwise noted, all Boisi Center event photos are by Christopher Soldt, MTS Photography.

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Boisi Center Spring 2018 Events

See our website for schedule updates.

Feb. 7
Gasson Hall 100
5:30 - 7pm

Candida Moss (University of Birmingham, UK)
Bible Nation: Hobby Lobby, Scripture, and the Making of America
The Inaugural Wolfe Lecture on Religion and American Politics

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Feb. 13
Devlin 101
5:30 - 6:45pm

Ronald Lacro, M.D. (Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School)
A Conversation on Religion, Spirituality, and Compassionate Healthcare
[Co-sponsored with the Connell School of Nursing and the Medical Humanities, Health, and Culture Program.]

Mar. 13
Boisi Center
12 - 1:15pm

Mara Willard (University of Oklahoma)
"Catholic Afterlives: What Identities and Practices Persist When Catholics Leave the Church?"
*Lunch Colloquium *RSVP Required**

Apr. 4
Devlin 101
5:30 - 7pm

Robert Orsi (Northwestern University)
Lived Religion and American History
Lecture

Apr. 5
Gasson 305
5:30 - 7pm

E.J. Dionne (Georgetown University; *The Washington Post*; Brookings Institution)
17th Annual Prophetic Voices Lecture

Apr. 26
McGuinn Hall 121
6:30 - 8pm

Lisa Cahill (Boston College), **Rev. J. Bryan Hehir** (Harvard University), **Massimo Faggioli** (Villanova University)
Pope Francis and the American Church: Five Years and Counting--Celebrating the Fifth Anniversary of the Election of Francis to the Chair of Peter
Panel Discussion