



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC announces inaugural Hancock and DePaul Fellows

#### *Scholars will research faith, beauty and healing*

LOS ANGELES, May 19, 2022 — The Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC has awarded two new fellowships to pioneering scholars making groundbreaking contributions to Catholic thought and research.

Brandon Vaidyanathan, Ph.D., and Leo Guardado, Ph.D., were selected from a competitive international field of candidates for the prestigious year-long fellowships created by IACS to support scholars conducting cutting-edge research across different academic disciplines that contributes to Catholic thinking.

“The Hancock and DePaul Fellowships will strengthen what scholarship and imagination that is informed by Catholicism’s developing ideas can creatively bring to the important questions of the day,” said IACS President Rev. Dorian Llywelyn, S.J. “Our new fellowship program will deepen and broaden the Institute’s contributions to promoting Catholic intellectual life in the 21st century.”

The inaugural Hancock Fellow is **Brandon Vaidyanathan, Ph.D.**, associate professor and chair of the Department of Sociology at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C.

Vaidyanathan’s research examines how culture shapes human flourishing across a variety of institutional disciplines and fields, including business, religion and science, and has been published widely in peer-reviewed journals. His research has been funded by grants from the John Templeton Foundation, the Templeton Religion Trust and the Lilly Endowment.

He holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business administration from St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia and HEC Montreal respectively, and a doctorate in sociology from the University of Notre Dame. Vaidyanathan is the author of [\*Mercenaries and Missionaries: Capitalism and Catholicism in the Global South\*](#), Cornell University Press (2019).

Born in Qatar, he lives in Maryland with his wife Claire and their six children.

Vaidyanathan’s work as 2023 IACS Hancock Fellow will include:



- Completing “A Beautiful Quest: The Power and Peril of Aesthetics in Science,” a book manuscript based on a four-country study of the role of aesthetics in science.
- Expanding [beautyatwork.net](https://beautyatwork.net) — a multimedia platform exploring the role of beauty in our lives and in our work that includes a YouTube channel and podcast.
- Organizing interdisciplinary events in the U.S. and Italy exploring the role of beauty in a variety of disciplines.

The inaugural DePaul Fellow is **Leo Guardado, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of theology at Fordham University. Born in El Salvador, Guardado immigrated to the U.S. with his mother when he was a child, settling in the Highland Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. He earned his bachelor’s degree in religious studies from St. Mary’s College of California, and his master’s of theological studies and a doctorate in systematic theology and peace studies from the University of Notre Dame.

His research focuses on theological responses to the violence of forced displacement, focusing specifically on the tradition of church sanctuary.

Guardado’s work as 2023 IACS DePaul Fellow includes:

- Bringing together theorists and practitioners from diverse disciplines and communities whose vision, knowledge and wisdom is required for rethinking and furthering social and communal healing and the Church’s own transformation, in the words of Pope Francis, into a “field hospital” that has healing at its heart.
- Investigating how the Catholic Church can integrate the knowledge of *curanderismo* from Latin American communities, and the insights from trauma studies and movement therapies, to respond to the multidimensional violence in which the Church exists in many places in the world.

### **About the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC:**

The Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies (IACS) is a globally-focused research center located at the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. IACS works to create dialogue, spark ideas and sustain academic research on Catholic thought, creative imagination and lived experience. Led by President Rev. Dorian Llywelyn, S.J. and Executive Director Becky Cerling, Ph.D., IACS supports scholars and creative artists, produces books, hosts academic conferences and cultural events, and furthers the intellectual work of the Catholic Church. Learn more at [iacs.usc.edu](https://iacs.usc.edu)