



RECOGNIZING BEAUTY

IACS projects aim to connect beauty in our world with goodness and truth

Dear Friends,

Pope Francis, in remarks to a gathering of Italian Catholic members of the film industry, said that in the Church, “Beauty has always been left to one side or at least in the corner.” He noted that of the three transcendentals, theologians emphasize goodness and truth, but not so much beauty.

And yet, we are almost universally drawn to beauty. Dozens of examples come to mind — just from my immediate family. When we commuted along Pacific Coast Highway, my husband and I noticed that morning traffic invariably slowed when drivers watched dolphins cavort close to shore. Our son, a woodworker, delights in a perfectly aligned joint connecting table to leg. My dad, a college math professor, saw beauty in numbers, equations, problems — often scribbled on the back of a napkin. Our daughter, who works with autistic children, marvels when a child first sustains eye contact. In every instance, we exclaim: “Beautiful!”

Beauty — in creation, in the arts and craftsmanship, in math and the sciences, in education and human friendship — takes us out of ourselves, pulls us together and, often, draws us to Christ, the source of all beauty and Beauty itself. We have a wonderful and instinctual attraction to beauty. But we need also to connect beauty with truth and goodness.

Hans Urs von Balthasar imagined that connection in this way: beauty dances around “the double constellation of the true and the good.” Truth, goodness and beauty are inseparable, and Balthasar pictures beauty as the dancing energy that holds them together. To separate

the three results in a flattening, in a skewed approach to life and learning, in false understandings of ourselves and of God. (*Glory of the Lord, Vol. I “Seeing the Form,” 18.*)

Pope Benedict XVI recounted an unforgettable experience of recognizing truth in beauty at a Bach concert. When the concert concluded, he and his friend immediately turned to one another and said: “Anyone who has heard this, knows that the faith is true.” Beauty and truth were connected when the audience heard the results of Bach’s expression of beauty. They felt it; they knew it. The apprehension of truth through beauty requires a different kind of knowing, a different epistemology. Knowledge that comes through feeling; heart knowledge. (“The Feeling of Things, the Contemplation of Beauty.”)

At IACS, we want to recognize beauty and reconnect it with goodness and truth. In “Holy Art in the Streets,” we’ve seen beauty in the work of Fabian Debora as he recognized and responded to the truth and goodness of Christ’s call through beauty. The “Beauty at Work” project spearheaded by IACS Hancock Fellow Brandon Vaidyanathan, Ph.D., examines how beauty is manifested in many disciplines, including science. And our next Fr. James L. Heft Generations in Dialogue cohort will focus on beauty in the arts.

Pope Francis, in the same address to members of the film industry, concluded that beauty is the work of the Holy



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IACS WELCOMES TWO NEW TRUSTEES

A pair of accomplished Catholic leaders have joined the IACS Board of Trustees.

Jason Zenk and **Kyle Ballarta** bring decades of experience to their new roles, and have worked closely with higher education nonprofits and Catholic universities.

By joining the 18-member Board of Trustees, Zenk and Ballarta provide governance and oversight while helping chart the Institute's direction. IACS trustees also serve as ambassadors, helping communicate the Institute's initiatives, programs and goals within their networks and among the public.

"We're pleased to welcome Jason and Kyle to the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC," said IACS Executive Director Becky King Cerling, Ph.D. "Their leadership and vision will be wonderful assets to IACS as we chart our future and work to strengthen the Catholic intellectual tradition, both here in the U.S. and across the globe."

A native of Tacoma, Wash., Zenk is a senior managing director at EnTrustGlobal, an investment firm based in New York City. Previously, he was CEO of Marco Consulting Group, an investment advisory firm based in Chicago. Zenk was appointed by Gov. Gary Locke in 2005 as an advisor to the Washington State Employee

Retirement Benefits Board. He also served on the City of Tacoma's Urban Policy Committee.



Jason Zenk



Kyle Ballarta

Zenk and his wife, Lisa, live in Hawaii and Montana. They have two children: an 11-year-old son, August, and a daughter, Anna, who is studying at the University of Michigan.

Ballarta is the founder and CEO of Falkon Ventures, a venture capital fund focused on new technology. Previously, he was a member of the founding team at LifeProof, a California-based consumer electronics company.

He is currently a professor at the Munday School of Business at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. Ballarta is a founding partner of the Laudato si' Challenge, a global initiative from Pope Francis supporting sustainable development through philanthropy.

A member of the Western Association of the Order of Malta, he lives in Austin, with his wife, Veronica.

Learn more at iacs.usc.edu †

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Spirit. At IACS, we don't want to neglect either beauty or the work of the Holy Spirit. We expect you don't either, and we're glad you've joined us. We hope that you will support our work supporting scholars and artists in their work that fosters Catholic thought, imagination and experience.

And email us your experiences of beauty, truth and goodness. Send them to iacs@usc.edu with the subject

line "Beauty." We'll feature some of them on our social media pages and our blog.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky Cerling". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Becky King Cerling, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC



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LATEST IACS NEWS
AND INSIGHTS

Our monthly e-mail newsletter *En Camino* features the latest Institute news and events, along with commentary and insights from IACS staff, scholars and friends.

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IACS TRUSTEE SPOTLIGHT: MICHAEL P. MORELAND

A renowned constitutional law and religious freedom scholar, **Michael Moreland** is University Professor of Law and Religion and Director of the Eleanor H. McCullen Center for Law, Religion and Public Policy at Villanova University. A lifelong Catholic, he earned his bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University of Notre Dame, a master's degree and Ph.D. in theological ethics from Boston College, and a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School. He began teaching at Villanova in 2006 and has held visiting positions at Princeton University and Notre Dame.

Before coming to Villanova, he served as Associate Director for Domestic Policy under President George W. Bush at the White House, where he worked on a range of legal policy issues, including criminal justice, immigration, civil rights and liability reform.

A longtime member of the IACS Board of Trustees, he was elected chair in April 2021.

His wife, Anna Moreland, Ph.D., is a theologian and the Anne Quinn Welsh Endowed Chair and Director of the Honors Program at Villanova. They have four children, including Juan Pablo, a sophomore at USC.

How did you first become involved with IACS?

I was aware of the project to create IACS back when I was in graduate school at Boston College in the 1990s. I was a research assistant for Fr. Michael Buckley, S.J. who was part of the group that met with Fr. Jim Heft, S.M. to explore creating a Catholic institute for advanced studies along the lines of the storied institute at Princeton. Then in 2017, a friend from graduate school, Dominic Doyle (an IACS trustee and a theology professor at Boston College) recommended me to Fr. Heft as a candidate for the Board of Trustees. Fr. Heft and I had lunch in Washington, D.C. and he invited me to join the IACS board, which includes people drawn from a variety of backgrounds, including academics like myself. I was honored by the invitation to serve on the board and readily accepted. In 2021, I was elected vice chair of the board and in 2022 I was elected chair.

What is your vision for IACS?

My hope for IACS is to be a home for cutting-edge research in important fields inspired by the Catholic intellectual tradition based at one of the country's leading research universities, the University of Southern California.



Michael Moreland, IACS board chair, and Anna Moreland, Ph.D., met with Generations in Dialogue scholars last year at Daylesford Abbey near Philadelphia.

What are your priorities as board chair?

In many respects, IACS is still an entrepreneurial organization, and we're aiming to build an institution that is unique in the landscape of American higher education and American Catholicism. As the Board of Trustees continues an international search for our Institute's next president, a top priority will be selecting a new leader who will work toward achieving our long-term goals related to our strategic vision, programming and fundraising.

What challenges does IACS face?

I would highlight three challenges. First, we live amid a culture that is becoming more secular, particularly in academia. It will be important for IACS to articulate the relevance and importance of religious perspectives — particularly the riches of the Catholic intellectual tradition — to various fields of inquiry. Second, we live amid highly divisive times in the Catholic Church and in politics. IACS can be a place that brings people together from across those divides, but that work will always be challenging. Finally, IACS needs resources to do all of this, and while we have generous benefactors and a small endowment to support some of our programs, we need more support if we are to realize the vision of a research center in the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Why is supporting IACS important?

There are questions and problems facing the world to which the Catholic intellectual tradition can provide a set of compelling answers, but doing so requires building Catholic institutions to support scholars undertaking the research needed to supply those answers. IACS is poised to be such an institution. †



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IACS HOSTS AUSTEN IVEREIGH

IACS proudly hosted a pair of events with papal biographer and Vatican journalist Austen Ivereigh.

“Enlarging the Space of our Tent,” was held in early February at Holy Family Church in South Pasadena and featured Ivereigh leading an in-depth conversation on the Synod



Papal biographer and Vatican journalist Austen Ivereigh joined IACS Executive Director Becky King Cerling, Ph.D., and USC Chief Sustainability Officer Mick Dalrymple for a conversation on ecology, sustainability and faith.

on Synodality, a multi-year initiative launched by Pope Francis aiming to generate feedback and ideas from Catholics across the globe.

Our second event, **“Caring for our Common Home,”** featured Ivereigh discussing Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato si’* with IACS Executive Director Becky King Cerling, Ph.D., and USC Chief Sustainability Officer Mick Dalrymple.

Held at the USC Tutor Campus Center, the discussion focused on USC’s sustainability efforts and the work to strengthen environmental stewardship among the public, along with the impact of climate change on urban communities and the role of religion in the global movement to protect the natural world.

Learn more at iacs.usc.edu †



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