

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

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“connecting good intentions with sound economics”

Crowd before Angelus of Pope Francis I. iStock © MattiaATH

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President's Message

"The first step must always start with our own lives..."

When young people first become aware of politics, and develop some ideals, they sometimes set out to change the system. That might mean getting involved with a campaign or seeking out an internship. It's not long before they discover that the system doesn't really want to change.

Once a young activist discovers this fact, he or she can be cynical and lose some of their ideals. Political change rarely happens from within the system itself. It usually emerges after social and cultural change take place. Politics and public policy are lagging indicators of culture and social attitudes.

How can we adjust our response to the need for change in light of this reality? The first step must always start with our own lives -- the part of the world we can most directly control.

Even in times when freedom seems to be slipping away, we should all take steps that help us live freer and more virtuous lives. Working in the commercial world, which provides goods and services to people, is one way. To be productive in this sector is a beautiful way of serving others and gaining a sense of the value of our own contribution.

Whatever our particular vocations -- business, education, health care, ministry -- there are ways we can use our talents to help ourselves live freer and holy lives while assisting others to do the same. It might not be obvious at first but there are ways that all of us in our own lives can make a difference to build stronger and more virtuous associations between people.

This is a viable path to reform. Rather than waiting for the political world to change, we can make a huge difference just by making changes in our own choices and ways. In so doing, we are part of the solution and reflect a greater measure of God's glory here on earth.

Your support of the Acton Institute assists us greatly in helping to prepare for a freer future.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Rev. Robert Sirico". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Rev. Robert Sirico, President

The mission of the Acton Institute is to promote a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles.

ACTONINSTITUTE

98 E. Fulton Street, Suite 101 • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • www.acton.org

Acton Experts Sought on Pope Francis

On March 13, the College of Cardinals selected a new pope, the Argentine Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, who chose the name Pope Francis. His papal title pays tribute to Saint Francis of Assisi, who devoted his life to poverty, shunning materialism and worldly comforts. Pope Francis is widely known for his humble simplicity, preferring to take public transportation and cook his own meals.

Pope Francis is the first Jesuit pope. In 1998 he became the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, and in 2001 was elevated to the office of cardinal. Pope Francis is the first pope from South America and the Western Hemisphere.

Rev. Robert Sirico, Dr. Samuel Gregg, Kishore Jayabalan, and Michael Severence were all in Rome when the announcement was made and spent the week offering commentary to American and international news outlets. Acton experts have appeared on *BBC World News*, *CNBC*, *Fox News*, *CBS News*, and

many other television, radio, and print news sources.

Rev. Sirico released the following statement about Bergoglio: “Pope Francis is a man of great spirituality who is known for his commitment to doctrinal orthodoxy as well as for his simplicity of life. Like Benedict XVI, he combines concern for the poor with an insistence that it’s not the Church’s responsibility to be a political actor or to prescribe precise solutions to economic problems. In that regard, he’s a model for all Catholic bishops and clergy throughout the world.”

Earlier, Pope Benedict XVI announced that he would resign from the papal seat at the end of February. As experts on Pope Benedict’s thought and theology, a host of Acton staff were called on to discuss the pope’s reasons for resigning. With the announcement of the new Pope, the Acton Institute broke all records for web and mobile traffic on the Website for March 13. You can follow the latest Acton coverage of Pope Francis on the Website at www.acton.org/

“In that regard, he’s a model for all Catholic bishops and clergy throughout the world.”



Benedictus XVI in 2008; Credit: Wiki Commons © Broc.



Rev. Sirico called on to discuss the pope's reasons for resigning.

From Our Conference Participants

Thank you for the conference scholarship I received for Acton University. The week fed my soul and challenged my mind.

—Jennifer Ellison
Portland, Oregon

In the climate of our culture, the Acton Institute’s vision and mission is essential. Academia is increasingly fraught with Marxist ideals, and Acton’s voice is an essential force in countering this trend.

—Nicole Meline
Huntington Beach, California

Rev. Robert Sirico at Aquinas Institute for Catholic Thought

Rev. Robert Sirico was invited to participate in The Aquinas Institute for Catholic Thought's Sixth Annual Great Debate on Monday, Jan. 28. The debate took place on the campus of the The University of Colorado at Boulder. It sought to answer the question: "Can the free market adequately care for the poor?" Fr. Peter Mussett, pastor of the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Center and director of campus ministries, moderated the debate, with Rev. Sirico arguing in the affirmative against Michael Sean Winters, a writer for *National Catholic Reporter*. It was a five-part debate with opening statements, a chance for rebuttals and questions, a period of questions from audience members, and closing statements.

Rev. Sirico opened the debate with a definition of free market capitalism; he said it is an economic system that:

Embraces the foundation of a positive and normative role for business, the market and the markets they engender,



Wiki Commons, Artist: Carlo Crivelli,

Saint Thomas Aquinas

private property to be considered sacred, though not absolute, and the means of production that result from all of this being kept in private hands.

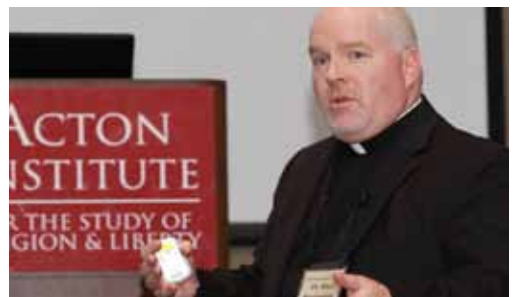
Winters argued for further regulations in the marketplace and declared, "We have an economic system that creates disincentives to act in a Christian manner – it is not morally neutral." If you are interested in viewing the entire debate, a video is available on the Acton PowerBlog under the title, "Video: The Sirico-Winters Debate on the Government's Role in Helping Poor."

AU Lecture Capsule: Morality and the Limits of Markets

On June 14, 2012, the Very Rev. Paul Hartmann delivered a lecture at Acton University titled "Morality and the Limits of Markets." Hartmann declared, "Wherever two or more are gathered, there is law." Hartmann made the point that in building a moral culture, there are limits to markets saying, "Markets will give you what the culture demands."

Hartmann stressed the different moral behaviors of humans and expressed the need for applying all of our lives and goals towards the ultimate good. He noted that the Greeks believed whether you followed the law determined whether you were a moral person. Thus, the lawgivers determined right and wrong. Hartmann then spoke about Thomas Aquinas and how his teaching was instrumental in appealing to the higher law and the deeper relationship between morality and law.

Hartmann declared the markets were morally neutral and said "our moral choices tell us we need



Very Rev. Paul Hartmann

something." He emphasized the importance of the market to live out the calling in our life that leads to God and added markets only limit that when they take away from the aims of holiness and rightly ordered love.

Very Rev. Paul Hartmann is the Judicial Vicar of the Metropolitan Tribunal, Archdiocese of Milwaukee and president of Catholic Memorial High School in Waukesha. He holds a Licentiate in Canon Law from the Catholic University of America, and received his M.Div from St. Francis Seminary. This course will be taught again by Hartmann at Acton University in 2013.

Acton Completes Move to New Headquarters

The Acton Institute has moved into its new building at 98 E. Fulton Street in downtown Grand Rapids. March 6 marked the first day for staff in the headquarters.

A new building was needed because of current expansion in programs, staff, outreach, and operations. The space adds a lecture hall, conference center, library, and studios for radio and television programming. The building provides a spacious 24,000 square feet and will allow for plenty of growth for Acton in the decades ahead.

In a February 21 story written for MLive by Jim Harger, he noted:

The institute, which was ranked 13th in the “Top 50 Social Policy Think Tanks” by the University of Pennsylvania’s Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program in January, is vacating offices it has occupied in the Waters Building.

Though construction fences still surround the three-story building, Acton officials

were eager to show off the transformation they have wrought inside the 84-year-old landmark in downtown Grand Rapids.

Some of the most dramatic changes are on the ground level, where construction crews dug down two feet and raised the ceiling two feet to create a 200-seat auditorium with adjoining breakout rooms and a gallery for receptions.

Acton is also proud to play a further role in the economic expansion and growth of downtown Grand Rapids. Acton’s executive director, Kris Mauren, told MLive he expects to make four to five new hires in 2013. The Acton Institute would like to thank the generous donors and supporters for making this move possible and for helping to expand our mission to promote a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles.



The Acton staff entering their new headquarters.



ACTON in the News

“I don’t think it’s very difficult at all to imagine how a George Washington, John Adams, John Witherspoon, or Charles Carroll would regard most of our political masters.”

—Excerpted from Dr. Samuel Gregg’s article in *National Review Online*.

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: Rhetoric versus Reality

Publication: *National Review Online*

Date: 2.12.13

Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: On the Pope’s Resignation

Publication: *National Review Online*

Date: 2.11.13

Ray Nothstine

Title: Liberty vs. Gun Control

Program: *Relevant Radio’s Drew Mariani Show*

Air Date: 1.16.13

Reminder

Help Acton Promote Freedom and Virtue!

The Acton Institute depends on the generosity of supporters like you. If you have not donated to Acton, but enjoy *Acton Notes*, please consider helping us meet our goals! Your help makes possible our mission to promote a free and virtuous society. You may choose to donate using the envelope provided, or you may visit the Acton website to make a secure donation online. We send our heartfelt thanks to those who have been so generous in the past with your strategic support as well as your prayers. You have a broad vision and a generous heart.

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ACTON'S NEW HEADQUARTERS



ACTON Book Shop



A Field Guide for the Hero's Journey

By Jeff Sandefer and Rev. Robert Sirico

Do you feel like something big is missing from your life? Do you feel trapped, bored, stuck in a meaningless routine? It may be you think you're too ordinary to ever do something special. Perhaps you're afraid that if you try, you'll fail. If so, this is the book for you. Welcome to your heroic journey.

Softcover 154 pages Original Price \$10.00 Sale \$9.00



Becoming Europe

By Samuel Gregg

In *Becoming Europe*, Samuel Gregg examines economic culture - the values and institutions that inform our economic priorities - to explain how European economic life has drifted in the direction of what Alexis de Tocqueville called "soft despotism", and the ways in which similar trends are manifesting themselves in the US.

Hardcover 384 pages Sale \$25.00

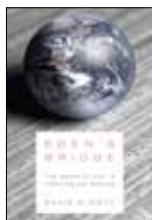


Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy

By Rev. Robert Sirico

Socialism has been discredited. The totalitarian states of the twentieth century have collapsed. And we beneficiaries of the globalized world economy are grateful that we enjoy plentiful food, clothing, shelter and cheap electronics. But can any moral person really be for capitalism?

Hardcover 256 pages Sale \$25.00



Eden's Bridge: The Marketplace in Creation and Mission

By David Doty

Eden's Bridge explores a biblically based theology of the marketplace implicit in the creation narrative of Genesis 1-2. The thesis validates the calling and ministry of all marketplace Christians. Doty invites readers to rethink and redirect the purposes of vocation, trade, and profit toward the purposes of God's Kingdom.

Softcover 198 pages Sale \$23.00

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Becoming Europe	\$25.00		
Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy	\$25.00		
Eden's Bridge: The Marketplace in Creation and Mission	\$23.00		

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Apr: TBD	Acton on Tap April 1775 and America's Revolutionary Ideas Ray Nothstine to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Apr 5	Philadelphia Society General Meeting Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Indianapolis, IN
Apr 18	Wake Forest University Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Winston-Salem, NC
May 2	Law Day Celebration Catholic Lawyers Association of Western Michigan Co-sponsored by the Acton Institute Rev. Robert Sirico to Speak	Grand Rapids, MI
May 9	Chicago Luncheon Rev. Robert Sirico to Speak	Chicago, IL
Jun 18	Acton University	Grand Rapids, MI

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