

# ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

July / August 2015, Volume 25, Number 4



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- 1,000 people from all over world attend 10th Acton University • Profile of an AU attendee
- AU lecture capsule • 2015 Annual Dinner will celebrate 25th anniversary of institute

# President's Message

Pope Francis' latest encyclical, *Laudato Si'* has encouraged a vibrant discussion about how we can improve our care of creation. Some people don't seem to realize that even good Catholics can charitably disagree with the pope when he addresses himself to non-dogmatic matters, which is precisely what much of this encyclical does. I have expressed my own concerns about some prudential aspects of what Pope Francis has to say.

"She knows that ending poverty is not a matter of redistributing wealth."

While greedy people do indeed exist I think that the pope's general tendency to criticize business people does not do justice to the leaders in business, technology, and education that I know. They are people of integrity and careful stewards of creation who deeply desire to make the world a better place for all people. I think of Carroll Ríos de Rodríguez, economics professor at Francisco Marroquín University. Rodríguez, who lives in Guatemala, is deeply invested in ensuring those in poverty have access to clean water. She knows that ending poverty is not a matter of redistributing wealth or using natural resources with no regard for stewardship. She speaks from enormous experience:

You want to prevent someone from walking ten miles ... every day to gather water that they need. But then you also have to pay attention to the fact that water is a scarce resource ... And then you have a well-intentioned project of bringing water into a village and people waste [it]. They let the water run and never turn the faucet off because it's free ... If you give people things for free, they'll take them for granted, and you actually kill an incentive to be creative, to be productive, to improve on what you currently have.

These are not the words of someone bent on maximizing profits or someone with no concern for the poor or creation. These are the words of a person equally committed to the poor and to the economy of her nation. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis says we must begin "a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet." This dialogue does not exclude the innovative thinking of those in business and technology who know that profit, care for the poor, and environmental stewardship are not mutually exclusive. It is a good thing that the pope calls for this dialogue.

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



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Robert Sirico". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Robert Sirico, President

ACTON INSTITUTE

98 E. Fulton Street • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • [www.acton.org](http://www.acton.org)

# Acton University celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Acton University is a four-day exploration of the intellectual foundations of a free society. It is an opportunity for people to deepen their knowledge of philosophy, theology and sound economics. The 2015 Acton University had 1,800 applicants and nearly 1,000 attendees fill up the halls of the DeVos Place in Grand Rapids, Michigan, breaking all previous application and attendance records.

Keynote speakers included Samuel Gregg, Acton's director of research, who opened the conference with a speech on truth, reason and equality. He was followed by Greg Thornbury, president of The King's College, and Joel Salatin, self-described "lunatic farmer." Rev. Robert Sirico, Acton's president and cofounder, closed the event by giving Friday's evening plenary. Marketing and tourism experts from Experience GR also had a presence during the week, promoting the conference to Grand Rapids residents, sharing information about the city with Acton U attendees and creating promotional materials for Acton.

Judi Niedercorn, a first-time Acton U attendee,

shared her thoughts on the week with Acton staff. She said she walked away both intellectually challenged by all the lectures and pleased with everyone she met, from "famous thought leaders" to Acton's "bright, engaging interns." She summarized her week by saying that "nobody can walk away from those days at Acton University unchanged or uninigorated to go forth and do good and great things!"

Acton U attendees also took part in one of the biggest religious news events of the year. Pope Francis released his highly anticipated encyclical *Laudato Si'* that week. Various individuals joined in the global conversation using social media. Television cameramen and reporters from local stations interviewed Acton staff and guests about the encyclical, and several individuals recorded official statements on the encyclical that can be viewed online at <http://blog.acton.org/pope-environment>.

If you're interested in hearing any lectures, class sessions, or dinner keynotes from Acton U, please visit <http://sites.fastspring.com/acton/product/actonuniversity2015>.



Attendees at the Acton University bookshop.



Joel Salatin speaking at Acton University.

## From Our Conference Participants

As a business school dean at a Christian school, I spend my life integrating scripture and business theory. Acton has provided me with a huge boost in my understanding of the theological language and perspective on the subject.

—2015 Acton University  
*Oikonomia* Fellow

I am a Charismatic eating dinner with a Baptist, a Catholic, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Wesleyan, and an Orthodox Christian ... only at Acton University!

—Scott C  
Newport News, Virginia

## Profile of an Acton University attendee: Yasmine Joseph

Yasmine Joseph traveled almost halfway across the globe from her home in Islamabad, Pakistan, to attend Acton University. Yasmine works as the head of country programs for the humanitarian relief organization Caritas Germany. *Caritas* is the Latin word for “charity,” and over the past 22 years, Yasmine has worked as “a representative of Christ’s love” by providing humanitarian relief in the wake of natural disasters and other emergencies throughout Central Asia. Yasmine’s work has included assisting in the relief effort after the devastating earthquake in Nepal this past April.

Yasmine is grateful that Acton U has provided her “broader vision and exposure” in relation to her job, and as a result, she plans on encouraging many of her colleagues to attend next year.

According to Yasmine, Acton U has provided “access to religious courses” that she has never been exposed to before. She also believes it has “expanded her knowledge base” and helped her improve the impact

of her humanitarian relief work and facilitate vibrant communication with individuals in her community. Additionally, she hopes to share with her colleagues her newfound inspiration to discover more about freedom and virtue. She plans to begin this intellectual journey by delving into the extensive list of recommended books and resources she accumulated from the various lectures at Acton.

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Akyol’s lecture touched on Middle Eastern history, Islam, governments and the interplay of all three of these elements. Students learned about the historical success of the Arab world and how it was once a center of innovation and wealth. Until the 12th century, per capita income in the Middle East was higher than that of Europe. Why did the region stagnate while Europe moved ahead? Akyol argued that trade was significant in this development. The Middle East used to be the center of trade for the world, but with the discovery of the Americas and the Horn of Africa, the center of trade shifted to Europe. The Middle East did not recognize that it was stagnating while Europe was

## ACTON News



Yasmine Joseph



Mustafa Akyol

moving ahead until the Europeans began colonizing the region.

Secularists say Middle Easterners will succeed if they get rid of religion, while conservative Muslims believe they fell behind because of a lack of religion. While people in the Middle East often hold one of these two beliefs, Akyol proposes a third solution. If the Middle East can regain free trade and get rid of excessive restrictions, the region can once again be competitive in the world economy. Forced religion does not work. In fact, “the way to be pious is to be free.”

## Acton University lecture capsule: Islam, markets, & the free market

The Middle East is an intriguing and complex region rich with diversity of culture, religion, geographical

# Acton announces date and keynote of 25th Annual Dinner

Mark your calendars! Acton's Annual Dinner and 25th Anniversary Celebration will be on October 21, starting with a cocktail hour at 6 p.m. EDT in the Steelcase Ballroom at the DeVos Place in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This black tie preferred gala will celebrate 25 years of promoting a free and virtuous society. Dinner and opening speeches will begin at 7 p.m. Rev. Robert Sirico, Acton's president and cofounder, will give the keynote address.

Many know Rev. Sirico as a public intellectual. He often appears in the pages of prominent newspapers and on radio and television programs to provide statements regarding economics, civil rights and religious issues. Rev. Sirico's contributions have been carried by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Forbes, The Washington Times, CNN, ABC, CBS, NPR, the BBC, among others. In his recent book, *Defending the Free Market: The Moral Case for a Free Economy*, Rev. Sirico shows how a free economy

“Rev. Sirico shows how a free economy is... the surest way to protect human dignity against government encroachment.”

is not only the best way to meet society's material needs but also the surest way to protect human dignity against government encroachment.

There are two sponsorship opportunities for this event: Liberty Circle and Lord Acton Circle. A Liberty Circle sponsorship costs \$3,000 and includes premier seating for a table of 10 and recognition for the contribution. A Lord Acton Circle sponsorship costs \$5,000 and includes VIP seating for 10, recognition for the contribution, and invitations to a

private cocktail reception with Rev. Sirico. Due to limited seating, it's advised to reserve a sponsorship. Single-seat tickets for this dinner are \$150 each, and all guests will receive a commemorative Acton Institute 25th Anniversary lapel pin. We hope to see you in October! For more information and to register online, visit [www.acton.org/dinner](http://www.acton.org/dinner), or contact Nick Porter at 616.454.3080 or [nporter@acton.org](mailto:nporter@acton.org).

25th Annual Dinner  
OCT 21, 2015  
RESERVE YOUR SEAT TODAY



For more Annual Dinner information and to register online, visit [www.acton.org/dinner](http://www.acton.org/dinner)

## ACTON in the News

“...capitalism has spurred the greatest reduction in global poverty in world history: The number of people living on \$1.25 a day fell to 375 million in 2013 from 811 million in 1991, according to the International Labor Office.”

—Excerpted from Rev. Sirico's article in *The Wall Street Journal*.

### Rev. Robert Sirico

Title: The Pope's Green Theology  
Publication: The Wall Street Journal  
Date: 6.18.15

### Kishore Jayabalan

Title: Reaction to Eco-Encyclical  
Program: News Nightly—EWTN  
Air Date: 6.18.15

### Jordan Ballor

Title: Why Big Oil Wants A Carbon Tax  
Publication: The Federalist  
Date: 6.29.15

## 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 of you who have been generous in the past with your strategic support as well as your prayers. You have a broad vision and a generous heart.

## INTRODUCE ACTON TO A FRIEND

KNOW SOMEONE WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED IN THE WORK OF THE ACTON INSTITUTE? USE OUR WEBSITE TO SEND THEM AN E-MAIL WITH INFORMATION ON OUR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES. THANKS FOR PROMOTING FREEDOM AND VIRTUE!

Visit: [www.acton.org/refer](http://www.acton.org/refer)

## ACTON UNIVERSITY 2015



# ACTON Book Shop

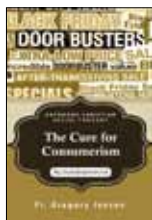


## FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD: LEADERS EDITION

*Produced by Acton Institute*

For the Life of the World is an entertaining film series that explores the deeper meaning of Salvation. Have you ever wondered, "What is my Salvation actually FOR?" Is it only about personal atonement, about getting to heaven, or something that comes later? Is it just to have a "friend in Jesus?"

**DVD/Field Guide Sale \$64.99**

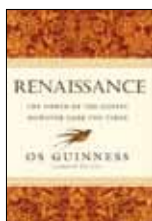


## THE CURE FOR CONSUMERISM

*By Fr. Gregory Jensen*

*The Cure for Consumerism* examines popular prescriptions for addressing consumerism that range from simply consuming less to completely overhauling our economic system. Jensen synthesizes insights from the spiritual tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Church with modern social science.

**Softcover 154 pages Sale \$6.00**



## RENAISSANCE: THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL HOWEVER DARK THE TIMES

*By Os Guinness*

We live in dark times. Christians wonder: Are the best days of the Christian faith behind us? Has modernity made Christian thought irrelevant and impotent? Is society beyond all hope of redemption and renewal? In *Renaissance*, Os Guinness declares no.

**Softcover 192 pages Sale \$16.00**



## ACTON UNIVERSITY 2014 FLASH DRIVE BUNDLE

*Produced by Acton Institute*

Own all 107 of the lectures from Acton University 2014 on a USB flash drive with this inexpensive bundle. Valued at \$ 105.93, these lectures were recorded live at Acton University 2014 sessions. The drive itself comes with lectures numbered, including the lecturer and course title in the file name.

**Flash Drive Bundle Sale \$25.00**

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## ACTON notes

### Calendar of Events

#### ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
<b>Aug 25</b>	<b>Acton on Tap</b> Sanchez Bistro Dave Hebert to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
<b>Sep 9</b>	<b>Judaism, Christianity, and the West: Building and Preserving the Institutions of Freedom</b>	Jerusalem, Israel
<b>Sep 14</b>	<b>Acton on Tap</b> Sanchez Bistro Elise Hilton to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
<b>Sep 24–26</b>	<b>Thriving Churches: Flourishing Communities Conference</b>	Weehawken, NJ
<b>Oct 21</b>	<b>Acton's 25th Anniversary Annual Dinner</b> DeVos Place - Steelcase Ballroom	Grand Rapids, MI
<b>Oct 29</b>	<b>Houston Luncheon</b> Rev. Robert Sirico to speak	Houston, TX