

Notes

May/June Vol. 31 No. 3



A message from our president

Rev. Robert A. Sirico

At the heart of every religion, society, and institution is a vision of the human person. This vision is fundamental to reasoning about the common good. The human person—created in the image of God, individually unique and rational—has moral agency and is thus, in some respects, a co-creator. Accordingly, they possesses intrinsic value and dignity, implying certain rights and duties both for themselves and other persons. This vision of free and responsible individuals is revealed to us in revelation but is also discernable through reason. An essential component of the Acton Institute's

mission is to communicate both sorts of arguments, drawing on religious tradition as well as reason to make the case for the dignity of the human person.

One of the forums where we have built this case over the years is Acton University. In this issue, we discuss Acton University Online 2021—an event we believe will build on the success of last year's online Acton University, which engaged thousands around the globe in the ideas essential to a free and virtuous society. There is also a brief profile of an alumnus of Acton University, Jorge Valarde Rosso, who has impressively put those ideas to work in his native Bolivia by founding a think tank called LIBERA.

It is also a pleasure to share news of our Acton Lecture Series event in

which Dr. Jessica Hooten Wilson, the Louise Cowan Scholar in Residence at the University of Dallas, addressed the life of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and his fight against propaganda using art. These events now have a worldwide audience, and we encourage you to participate virtually wherever you may be physically. And, if you would like to view videos from previous Acton Lecture Series events, please visit our official YouTube page, youtube.com/actoninstitute.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our donors. Thank you! Your support is more important than ever in these difficult times. If you are just learning about Acton, be sure to check out our website, and please prayerfully consider supporting us in our mission. **N**

Acton Events **REGISTER AT [ACTON.ORG/EVENTS](https://acton.org/events) • WATCH ONLINE AT [ACTON.ORG/LIVE](https://acton.org/live)**

| DATE | EVENT | LOCATION |
|-----------|---|---------------|
| JUN 23-24 | Acton University <i>Acton University Online is not your typical digital conference. It's a unique, two-day, live and interactive experience exploring the intellectual foundations of a free society.</i> <i>We're bringing together leaders in business and the church, academia and the ministry, the developed and the developing world, from a variety of faith traditions to explore what makes a free and virtuous society. Acton University 2021 will be held online June 23-24 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST. For more information, please visit: university.acton.org</i> | Online |

Acton University interview: Jorge Velarde Rosso

Ben Stoner

HOW DID YOU FIRST BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH THE ACTON INSTITUTE?

When I was living in Buenos Aires in 2009, a friend introduced me to Acton University (AU) and encouraged me to apply for a fellowship. So AU 2010 was my first Acton Institute event. I can honestly say, without exaggeration, that the experience changed my life. I was only 25 years old, and I was so impressed that I decided to do something in my homeland of Bolivia to help spread the ideas and values Acton promotes. In 2011, as a professor at the Bolivian Catholic University, I decided to work with my best students on a project that has grown into the think tank we called LIBERA.

GROWING UP IN BOLIVIA, WHEN WERE YOU FIRST INTRODUCED TO CLASSICAL LIBERALISM AND HOW DID THAT INFORM YOUR CAREER PATH?


Growing up in Bolivia, I encountered socialist ideas very early on. When I was 15 years old, I even admired Che Guevara! But by the time I was 18, I outgrew those ideas, and on my own I began to research new authors and ideas. I decided to study political science, and when I was preparing my dissertation in 2006, I found a book by the then recently elected Pope Benedict XVI. His writings led me

to classical liberalism, in great harmony with the Catholic tradition. That is why I felt so “at home” when I went to AU 2010.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO FOUND THE THINK TANK LIBERA?

Besides my experience at AU 2010, I would say that my inspiration comes from my Catholic faith, the idea of work as a calling and the responsibility of putting my talents to good use. Also, knowing that Bolivia needs new leadership for the reconstruction after the socialist regimen.

ARE YOU WORKING ON ANY MAJOR PROJECTS?

We have many, but the biggest is a documentary we are producing about Bolivian entrepreneurs and how the free market helps people rise out of poverty. PovertyCure and Poverty, Inc. are both great inspirations. To watch the teaser, simply scan the QR code below. 



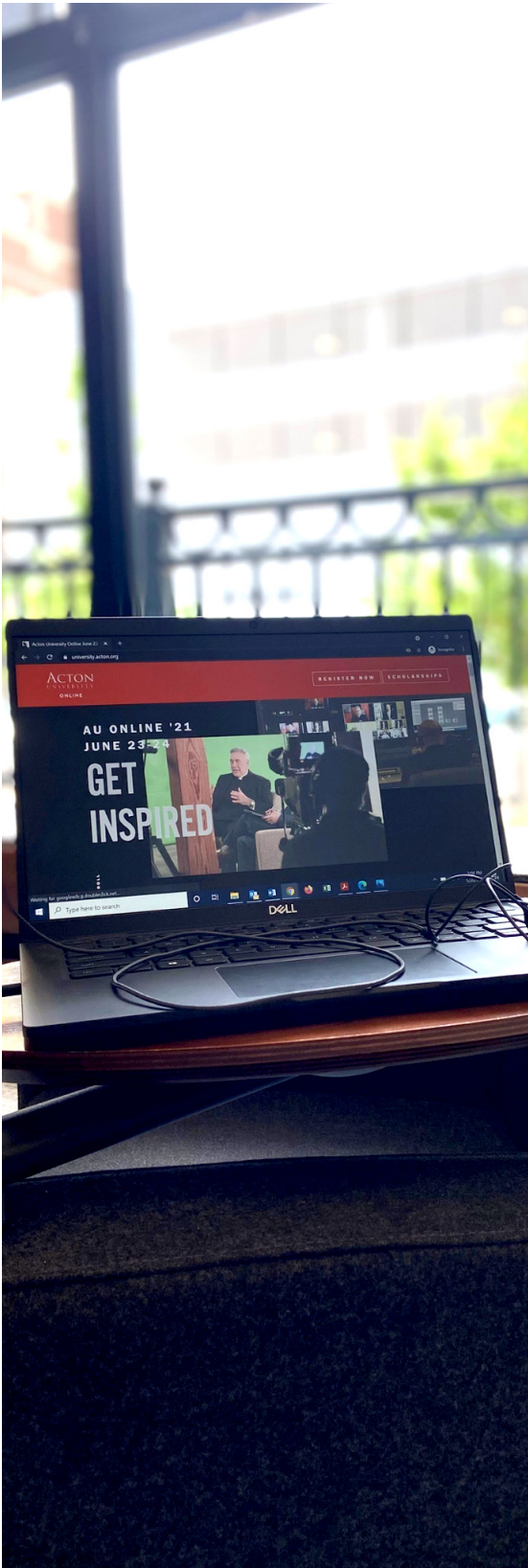
FEATURED STORY

Acton University Online 2021 is coming soon

The Acton Institute's flagship annual conference will return June 23-24, 2021. Due to the ongoing global pandemic, Acton has chosen to host Acton University Online as a two-day digital experience. While many organizations have pivoted to a virtual format, Acton University Online is not your typical digital conference. It's a unique, live and interactive experience exploring the intellectual foundations of a free society.

This year we will bring together leaders in business, the church, academia and ministry from the developed and the developing world, as well as from a variety of faith traditions, to explore what makes a free and virtuous society. There will be over 30 live-stream events, more than 50 on-demand lectures and videos, and dozens of interactive networking and virtual spaces.

Acton University Online presents a holistic framework for understanding the foundations of genuine human flourishing organized around a series of core sessions on religious liberty; technology and big government vs. privacy; freedom of speech and the press; the social responsibility of business; law, liberty and space; and artificial intelligence, religion and anthropology. Other sessions offer opportunities to dig deeper into timely questions of poverty, economic development, automation, vocation, trade, finance, socialism, entrepreneurship, religious freedom, social justice, inequality



and stewardship.

This will be the second year Acton University will host the entire event online. Last year over 4,000 people registered from over 88 countries and territories, including all 50 states. Following the event, positive feedback flooded in and many participants noted how the event still felt personal despite being held virtually, while others praised the effectiveness of the digital platforms.

Here are the words of one conference participant:

“The online platform was impressive, even savvy. I really enjoyed the Networking Room and making connections with others. The video quality was above par. This was an excellent online conference. I truly enjoyed it.”


Another attendee praised the web-based technology:

“The app was helpful and the website easy to navigate. I appreciated the breadth of topics, yet the topics interrelated. The sessions and online lectures were very stimulating and interesting.”

Acton University Online will run each day (June 23 and 24) from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. We hope you will join us for two engaging and inspiring days that will equip you to build and advance a free and virtuous society!

FEATURED SPEAKERS AND EXPERTS:

- *Former Secretary of Education*
Betsy DeVos
- *Former Kansas Senator and Governor*
Sam Brownback
- *Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy*
- *Anthony Bradley*
- *Ismael Hernandez*
- *And many more*

To learn more or to register for Acton University Online, visit university.acton.org. 



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ACTON INSTITUTE

You Tube

Check out the Acton Institute's official YouTube page to watch videos from the Acton Lecture Series and Business Matters 2021.

| ACTON INSTITUTE | ACTON INSTITUTE | BUSINESS MATTERS 2021 |
|--|--|--|
|  Anthony Bradley: Why Black Matter |  Jessica Hooten Wilson: Solzhenitsyn against... |  Business Matters 2021 |
| 09:26 | 1:00:29 | |

youtube.com/actoninstitute

BRIEF

Goodbye to the Acton Institute

Rev. Ben Johnson

Over the last five-and-a-half years, I've served as the executive editor of the Acton Institute. In a sense, this fulfilled a very young man's dream. I remember the joy I felt when I read about the founding of the Acton Institute in 1990. My father, an accountant, explained elementary economic truths to me at a young age, so I grew up seeing the laws of economics prevail over bankrupt, if well-meaning, theories time and again. As a teen, I had a subscription to FEE's journal, *The Freeman*. When I learned that a new institute intended to connect the truths of economics to my newly rekindled faith, I marked it as an organization to watch.

I connected with Acton when I was the managing editor of another publication and I commissioned an article from Fr. Robert Sirico on liberation theology. In 2010, I drove across Michigan to see Jordan Ballor give a dazzlingly insightful presentation at an "Acton on Tap" event at a Grand Rapids bar. Two years later, I was invited to attend Acton University. The rest, as they say, is history – and so, too, now is this chapter of my professional life. I've decided I must step away from my work with Acton.

Far beyond asking you for anything more, I want to thank you, our readers, for all you've given me. Thank you for the privilege of sharing my thoughts and inspirations with you for all these years ... and for sharing yours with me. God bless you all, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. **N**

BRIEF

Solzhenitsyn against Propaganda

Ben Stoner

On April 29, the Acton Institute welcomed Dr. Jessica Hooten Wilson, the Louise Cowan Scholar in Residence at the University of Dallas, to speak as part of Acton's Lecture Series online. The lecture, titled "Solzhenitsyn against Propaganda," addressed the life of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and his fight against propaganda using art.

Dr. Hooten Wilson began with a brief biography of Solzhenitsyn, sharing how he joined the communist party and fought for the Red Army but left after witnessing the atrocious treatment of the Germans by Russian soldiers. Soon after, Solzhenitsyn began to write and criticize communism and Stalin's rule. "This led to his imprisonment in 1945," said Hooten Wilson.

Solzhenitsyn's experience in prisons had a startling effect on him. "He not only learned to love those who differed from him; at this point in the prison camps, he learned to love Christians and then actually became one. But he also learned to love the guards," said Hooten Wilson.

After spending about eight years in prisons and forced labor camps, Solzhenitsyn was released and exiled from Russia. "Solzhenitsyn moved to America and spent eighteen years in Vermont, which was the most productive time in his entire life," shared Hooten Wilson.

"In 1970, Solzhenitsyn won the Nobel Peace Prize for Literature, and in his Nobel lecture," explained Hooten Wilson, "Solzhenitsyn insists on the nature of art to portray truth. Lies can stand up against much in the world, but not against art." **N**

ACTON UNIVERSITY ONLINE



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