



The Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies

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Bob and Betty Plumleigh: In Philanthropy and Adventure, One Very Special Couple

By Ginny DeFrank

*“If you don’t talk to people, you don’t hear!”
“And you don’t learn anything!”*

These thoughts from Bob and Betty Plumleigh, respectively, encapsulate this dynamic duo’s philosophy for living life to the fullest. For Betty and Bob, life is an adventure, and they take great joy in making new friends along the way – learning about these friends’ interests and passions. Fortunately for the Institute of the Advancement of Catholic Studies at USC, Father James L. Heft, S.M., is one such friend.

When asked about the beginnings of their friendship, Mr. Plumleigh explained, “We met Fr. Heft on the way to a football game!” Apparently Fr. Heft mistook the couple’s flamboyant USC shirts for Halloween costumes, as the game coincided with Halloween weekend. Fr. Heft jokingly explained his collar was not a costume, and he was surprised to learn from the Plumleighs that they too were wearing their typical game day garb.

Enthusiastic supporters of a wide variety of programs, initiatives, and schools at the University of Southern California, the Plumleighs are renowned for their generosity toward organizations doing work they believe in. Through their friendship with Father Heft, the Plumleighs have become great supporters of the Institute, pledging \$150,000 to its needs over the next three years.

Mrs. Plumleigh gave Fr. Heft’s work with the Institute a ringing endorsement. “I think he’s doing

a great job! We enjoy coming to campus for events and lectures.” Her husband was equally impressed with Fr. Heft, saying, “He’s very friendly, very warm, and always gathering people around him. Every time you have a discussion, you’re always learning something more about him and through him.”

But beyond his scholarship and leadership, the Plumleighs felt Fr. Heft’s friendship and devotion to their family is what truly makes him a remarkable priest. When Mr. Plumleigh fell ill, Fr. Heft visited



their Orange County home and celebrated mass. “That was outstanding,” said Mrs. Plumleigh, “Just outstanding.”

“We’ve been fortunate in that the priests we have been involved with are like family to us. continued ➔

The Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies, located at the University of Southern California, fosters Catholic intellectual and scholarly life. It brings together scholars from across the world in all disciplines who desire to engage in cross-disciplinary, ecumenical, and inter-faith conversation and research that retrieves, critiques, and develops a deeper understanding of the roles of religion and, particularly, Catholicism today.

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Our faith has been much more interesting because of it, and we're much more involved with the Church," said Mr. Plumleigh.

The Plumleights' commitment to the Institute extends well beyond their close relationship with Fr. Heft, however, as they are strong supporters of its mission to engage scholars in dialogue about the most pressing issues facing faith in modern society. "What a great thing the Institute is doing by bringing churches and the understanding of churches together. It is great for us, and it is great for people on the whole," said Mr. Plumleigh. "We need it! We *need* to bring people together," Mrs. Plumleigh added emphatically.

The Plumleights are certainly experts at bringing people together. This cosmopolitan couple regularly travels internationally to spend time with business associates from Mr. Plumleigh's importing business who have since become life-long friends. From participating in wedding ceremonies in France, to sharing an interfaith Seder dinner with their good friend and former USC professor, Shelley Berman, the Plumleights are enthusiastic about celebrating the joys of friendship, wherever and whenever possible. "We have the best time," Mrs. Plumleigh said smiling.

Wherever they go, the Plumleights find ways to help those in need, sharing their resources with organizations and individuals who have goals and visions that would not be possible without philanthropic support. Those who benefit from their incredible generosity, like the Institute for the Advancement of Catholic Studies, really understand the meaning of the Plumleights' friendship.

The Gift of Time:

Jill Ker Conway Discusses the Importance of Planned Giving

By Ginny DeFrank



Jill Ker Conway

A woman renowned for her gifts with words, Jill Ker Conway recently used the written word to give a gift that will have a lasting impact on the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies. Mrs. Conway elected to allocate a portion of her estate to the Institute, taking advantage of the opportunity to make a planned gift tailored to her philanthropic goals and financial needs.

"The aim of the Institute has always been to create a supportive and interesting environment for younger scholars who may or may not be Catholic but who want to study Catholicism. The Institute was an opportunity for them to connect and share a collective intellectual life. It seems immensely important to achieve that goal for the future of Catholicism, and it is something that we are now closer to achieving. It's very gratifying to provide the Institute with long-term support," Mrs. Conway said.

As a trustee of the Institute, Mrs. Conway has witnessed firsthand the tremendous progress that has been made toward achieving the Institute's mission since its inception. Father James L. Heft, S.M., President of the Institute and longtime friend of Mrs. Conway, commented on her work. "Jill Conway has been an inspiration to me for decades, and now as a board member not only inspires but also mentors me in the important work of growing the Institute. She brings multiple skills to the board table: language, planning, vision and a long experience of distinguished institutional leadership." Their appreciation of one another is certainly mutual, with Mrs. Conway saying of Fr. Heft, whom she first met while he was a graduate student at the University of Toronto, "He has been the principal planner, fundraiser, and dreamer about what could be achieved at the Institute, and his efforts have been tireless."

Mrs. Conway certainly knows what it means to work hard. An author, professor, board member, trustee, and first female president of Smith College throughout the course of her lifetime, Mrs. Conway still dedicates her energies to leadership. She currently helps run a small parish in Western Massachusetts that has no pastor, as well as serving as trustee for priests' retirement funds for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. Her varied experiences have given her particular insight into what it takes to keep an organization moving forward. "Anybody who is able to ensure long-term funding for a new or young institution is giving the greatest gift. Having the ability to plan for the long-term rather than worrying about funding day-to-day operations is key to the Institute's success."

When asked about her choice to make a planned gift, Mrs. Conway explained, "I believe anyone who is a trustee of a non-profit has a responsibility to support the organization financially. At the moment, I had to defer the gift because of the economic downturn, but I wanted to do something as a sign of strong support. I decided to make the Institute a part of my will. Giving the gift of time, and the ability to plan, is the greatest gift one can give."

To learn more about planned giving and the many options available for supporting the Institute, please contact Todd Thaxton at 213.740.7826 or by e-mail at thaxton@usc.edu.

In the News

President and Mrs. Steven B. Sample host special dinner celebrating the Institute at USC

On Monday, May 11, 2009, President and Mrs. Sample hosted a dinner celebrating the Institute. Institute trustee and California State Librarian Emeritus, Professor Kevin Starr made special remarks. Over 50 scholars, Institute trustees, USC trustees and friends of the Institute attended this private event.



Photograph by Steve Cohn

President and Mrs. Sample with Father Heft

Kevin Starr Launches 2009-2010 Lecture Series

2006 National Medal of Humanities recipient, California State Librarian Emeritus, Professor Kevin Starr talked to an audience of scholars, friends of the Institute and about the topic of his current research: History of Catholicism in the United States. Starr commented on what led him to his current research. He sketched out several themes and personalities he intends to highlight in this, his tenth book.



Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies Annual Fund 2009

Last year, the Institute launched its first-ever annual fund drive. Special thanks to those who contributed through these efforts. Funds raised through the annual fund will support critical operational areas such as conference planning, organization of research projects, development of new research initiatives.

To contribute, please visit: www.ifacs.com/donor/. Should you have any questions, please contact Todd Thaxton at 213-740-7826 or via e-mail Thaxton@usc.edu.

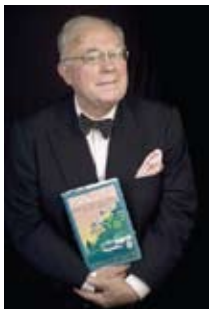
2009-2010 Fall Lecture Series Speakers Announced:

This year promises to be a great success as the Institute hosts three eminent scholars.

- **Tuesday, September 22, 2009** — the Institute hosted 2006 National Humanities Medal Recipient, Professor Kevin Starr who talked about Catholicism in the United States.
- **Wednesday, October 21, 2009** — Peter Steinfels, co-director of the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture and New York Times columnist will discuss: *A Catholic Approach to American Public Life*.
- **Wednesday, November 11, 2009** — Michael Perry, Robert W. Woodruff Professor at Emory will discuss: *The Political Morality of Liberal Democracy*.

All lectures will be held at 5:00 p.m. and at the Davidson Conference Center. A brief reception precedes each lecture at 4:30 p.m.

For more information, please visit: www.ifacs.com/lecture_series/. Should you have any questions, please contact Shelia Garrison at 213-740-1864 or via e-mail at skgarris@usc.edu.



Kevin Starr



Michael Perry



Peter Steinfels

James T. Fisher, 2008-2009 Film and Religion Lecture Series speaker, Publishes New Book

On September 24, 2008, Professor Fisher discussed: 'On the Waterfront': The Great American Catholic Movie (made by Non-Catholics). Now, Cornell University Press is pleased to announce the publication of his work. In this book titled *On the Irish Waterfront: The Crusader, the Movie and the Soul of the Port of New York*, Professor Fisher provides a richly detailed portrait of the world of the largely Irish-Catholic New York harbor in the middle decades of the twentieth century; within which lived the real people behind the indelible characters in Elia Kazan's classic 1954 film, *On the Waterfront*.





Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at USC
University Religious Center, Suite 102
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0751



From the President

Dear Friends,

Summers around universities are supposed to move at a little slower pace. This doesn't seem to be true for us at the Institute. Our research projects continue to hum along. Those already published continue to receive high praise.

Oxford University Press has just accepted for publication a volume of essays edited by Daniel Finn, economist, theologian and Institute trustee. This book contains the essays of an international group of economists, ethicists and social scientists who met at USC a summer ago for four days of intensive conversation. Pope Benedict's recently released third encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*, which updates Catholic social teaching, especially as it relates to the global economy, has amplified interest in our own Oxford book. We are now in conversation with still other scholars on these issues, and will be continuing our research along these lines.

This fall we will be putting together another book for publication—this time a set of essays on John O'Malley's latest book, *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Harvard University Press, 2008). At present, we have three other books submitted to Oxford University Press for review—one on authority and tradition in the Catholic Church, one on Catholicism and other world religions, and one on intellectual humility

among Jews, Christians and Muslims. Finally, we are exploring some new very promising ways to organize intensive conversations between junior and senior scholars interested in doing research and writing together. We have also launched a new USC lecture series this fall.

I did a good deal of travelling this past summer on behalf of the Institute, meeting with people all over the United States, in Europe and in Egypt. Yes, Egypt. It turns out that I received an invitation from Al Azhar University (the center Sunni Islamic scholarship) in Cairo to give a paper at a conference they had organized for late June in Cairo. The theme of the conference was "Islam and the West." It was my first trip to Egypt. The three day conference (I spoke on the last day) was fascinating, difficult, and worthwhile (see pictures). Many of the western scholars who had been invited had already heard about the Institute and wanted to know more about us. The University is publishing my presentation, "A Catholic Contribution to the Dialogue with Islam."

As you can see, this has been a very productive time for us. I am personally grateful to those of you who have been supportive of our efforts. Your generosity of counsel, resources, participation and time has been enormously helpful.

As ever,

Father James L. Heft, S.M.



At midnight on deck of a river boat in the Nile, Fr. Heft teaching surrounded by Muslim students (June 29, 2009).



In Cairo, section of Old Town (June 26, 2009).

Contact Information

Fr. James Heft, S.M.

President

Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies
University Religious Center, Suite 102
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0751
T: 213.740.3055 • F: 213.740.2179
heft@usc.edu

Shelia Garrison

Administrative Assistant

Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies
University Religious Center, Suite 102
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0751
T: 213.740.1864 • F: 213.740.2179
skgarris@usc.edu

Thom Rhue

Associate Senior Vice President

University Advancement
University of Southern California
Bovard Administration Building, Suite 160
Los Angeles, CA 90089-4017
T: 213.740.1218 • F: 213.740.8149
rhue@usc.edu

Todd Thaxton

Director of Central Projects

University Advancement
University of Southern California
Bovard Administration Building, Suite 260
Los Angeles, CA 90089-5016
T: 213.740.7826 • F: 213.740.8428
thaxton@usc.edu

Website: www.ifacs.com