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The Local Church from a National Perspective: Collecting American Catholic History at the Catholic University of America

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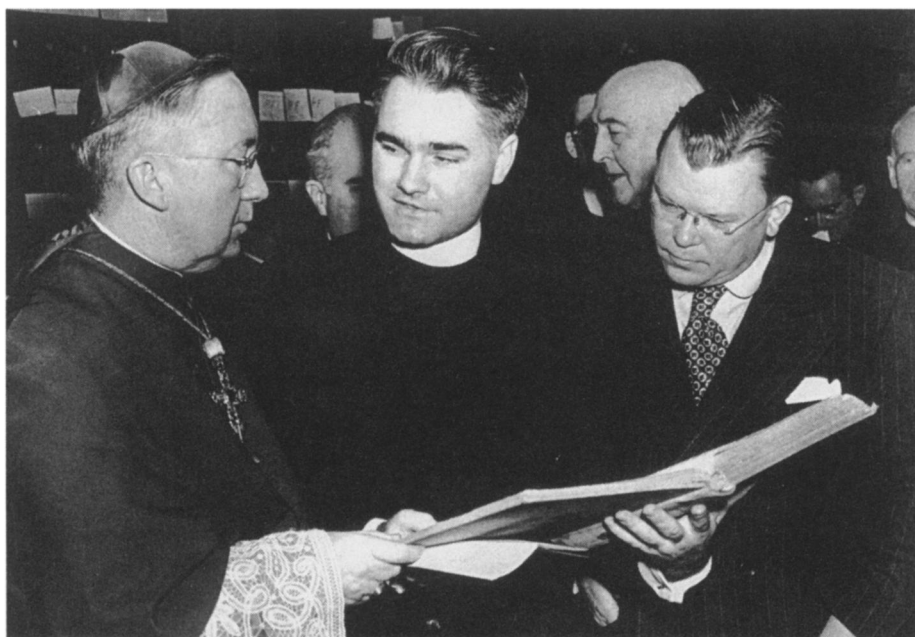


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# The Local Church from a National Perspective: Collecting American Catholic History at the Catholic University of America

Timothy J. Meagher and William John Shepherd

**O**n December 8, 1949, a small but distinguished group, including Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle of Washington D.C., Dr. Ernst Posner, then archivist and professor at American University, Wayne Grover, Archivist of United States, and Rev. John Tracy Ellis, distinguished historian of American Catholic history, gathered in the foyer of the John K. Mullen of Denver Library to officially open the Archives of the Catholic University of America. Grover, Posner and O'Boyle all spoke in general terms of the importance of archives to "preserve the values of civilized mankind," or to laud the Catholic Church for preserving twenty centuries of western history. Ellis, by contrast, had a vision for this archives for this time. A professor of church history at the University, he had lobbied for this archives for several years. For



*Blessing of the Archives, Dec. 8, 1949. From left to right: Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle of Washington, D.C., Rev. Henry Browne, CUA Archivist, are courtesy Doctor Wayne Grover, Archivist of the U.S. (All illustrations for this article are courtesy of Archives of the Catholic University, ACUA.)*

him, the Catholic University Archives, “would be fulfilling the wish expressed by James Cardinal Gibbons, our first chancellor, when . . . he urged: ‘gather up the letters of the past — gather up those pamphlets — gather up all those records that are essential for the fullness of our Catholic history . . . to find out all that is useful for the future history of the Catholic church in America.’”<sup>1</sup>

Ellis clearly understood the archives’ role as a repository of papers and records that “could become a research center for American Catholic history.” Ellis’ pleadings with University officials had played on fears that the American Catholic heritage was in danger of being lost; records and papers of American Catholic history could easily be dispersed, forgotten and ultimately destroyed. Though there were a few archives dedicated to recovering or collecting the documents of the American Catholic experience, they were not organized in any modern or professional sense. Catholic universities had established archives: The University of Notre Dame had been collecting Catholic documents under the leadership of James F. Edwards, history professor and librarian from 1876 to 1911; Notre Dame became a major archive for American Catholic history. In the twentieth century, Rev. Thomas McAvoy, CSC, the superb, pioneering historian of American Catholicism, served as Notre Dame’s archivist and helped to augment what was already a rich collection. Notre Dame was an exception, however. Other Catholic colleges and universities collected papers and records, but many failed to establish formal archives or special collections departments until recently. Marquette University, for example, did not establish its excellent archival program until 1961.<sup>2</sup>

In 1949, Ellis could make a good case to Catholic University officials about the real possibility that American Catholicism’s documentary heritage would be lost unless the University created an archives to collect and preserve those materials. Indeed, Ellis argued, it was not only necessary, but “fitting” that Catholic University “as the national and pontifical university” should assume such a role.<sup>3</sup>

What would prove harder to define precisely over the next twenty years was what records and papers of American Catholic history the new archives would collect. As much as archivists strive to exert some rational control over how their collections grow, the process of collection development is most often a complicated historical one, subject not just to the interests of archivists or the

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1. Emmet Dougherty, Catholic University of America Public Relations Department, Press Release, December 12, 1949, Library folder, Administrative files, Archives of the Catholic University of America (ACUA).

2. University of Notre Dame Archives, *Guide to Manuscript Collections* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1993) p. 1-2.

3. Dougherty, Press Release, December 12, 1949.

organizations they represent, but broad social and political trends, institutional changes, negotiations of “turf” fights, and the evolution of the historical and archival professions. In the case of the Catholic University Archives, the problem of what to collect was complicated by the Catholic Church’s structure. Much of the “work” in American Catholicism is carried on in parishes, dioceses and by religious orders, and those institutions bear official responsibilities for taking care of their records. Most dioceses, as noted, have not had professionally run archival programs until recent times and some still do not. James Edwards of Notre Dame began collecting the papers and mementoes of bishops in the nineteenth century. Notre Dame’s *Guide to Manuscript Collections* explains today: “He found that many bishops had no interest in maintaining files of their own correspondence; some willingly turned all their papers over to him.” Monsignor Peter Guilday, the dean of American Catholic historians of his generation, would also collect records and papers of the dioceses of New York and Charleston, South Carolina, in the course of his research on Bishop John England and Archbishop John Hughes in the early twentieth century. Though most dioceses still had no archival programs at the time the Catholic University Archives was created, the new Archives sensitive to institutional prerogatives in the church, would not collect diocesan records or the papers of bishops as active ordinaries of their dioceses. That left open, however, what it would collect.<sup>4</sup>

Over most of the first twenty years of its existence the archives collected largely personal papers. Most of these papers were of people connected with Catholic University, but the archives also began to build a substantial and rich collection of labor history papers. Though the archives collection was diverse, these labor records as well as many of the personal papers made it particularly strong in documenting social reform and activism. This concentration reflected both a long and important tradition at Catholic University and the interests of the first archivist, Rev. Henry Browne. These papers and records collected early in its history are useful sources for a whole host of topics, the American labor movement, Progressivism, the New Deal, and American Catholic social thought and activism, but they shed only a little light on local — diocesan or parish — history.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Catholic University Archives Collections changed dramatically. It became the depository for the United States Catholic Conference — National Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCC-NCCB), formerly known as the National Catholic Welfare Conference, as well as for the National Catholic Educational Association and Catholic Charities U.S.A., formerly known as the National Conference of Catholic Charities. These organiza-

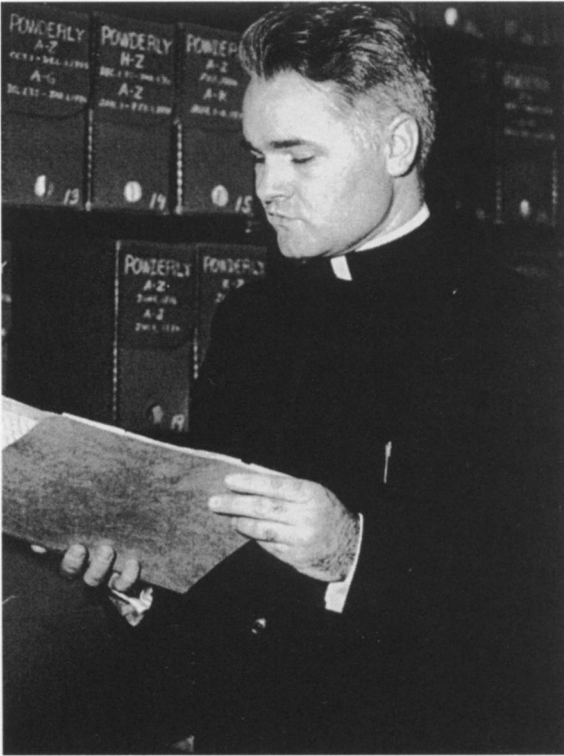
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4. *Guide to Manuscript Collections*, p. 1.



***Phillip Murray papers presented to University. Left to right: Mr. Frank N. Hoffmann, Legislative Representative, United Steelworkers of America; Most Rev. Bryan J. McEntegart, D.D., Rector; Mr. David McDonald, Pres., CIO and United Steelworkers of America; Mr. Anthony J. Federoff, Staff Representative, United Steelworkers of America; Rt. Rev. Msgr. William J. McDonald, Ph. D., Vice Rector; Rev. Henry J. Browne, Ph.D., Archivist.***

tions were all a product of a trend to organization at the national level in the church in the twentieth century. In the 1960s and 1970s changes in the structures of these organizations and rising interest in American Catholicism among historians helped foster a new interest in their records and encouraged them to seek an archives. Catholic University's historic links to all three organizations, its Washington location convenient to their headquarters, and the efforts of representatives of the University such as Professor Robert Trisco and Professor Dorothy Mohler, helped bring these collections to the University's Archives. These collections and some others that came during roughly the same period, the National Christ Child Society and Catholic Interracial Council of New York, for example, have considerably more information shedding light on bishops, diocesan activities and local Catholic history. Yet these collections are hardly a substitute for diocesan records or individual bishop's papers. They are most useful for understanding broad trends, national or across several dioceses, not all trends or events in one diocese, or investigating several bishops on certain issues, not one bishop on many questions. Most of these collections offer a unique perspective in American Catholic history, made rich by the very fact of their national breadth, but they become less useful the more narrow the geo-



***First CUA Archivist, (1948-1956) Rev. Henry J. Browne***

organization presently defunct or willing to dispose of obsolete material.” Later, just before the official opening of the Archives, Rev. Henry Browne, the new archivist, spoke in the same vein. He argued “that through the preservation of “non-institutional records” of American Catholic life such as we hope our manuscript collections will be we shall save what is past for the future.” Browne’s conception of Catholic non-institutional records was very broad. He pointed to sets of papers that the University had acquired before there ever was an archives or even contemplation of one: the papers of Terence Vincent Powderly, Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor in the 1880s, and John Mitchell, President of the United Mine Workers, from 1899 to 1908, are examples of such records. Mitchell was not a Catholic (his wife was Catholic, however), and Powderly, though he was Catholic, had a rocky relationship with the church throughout his life. Nevertheless, Browne suggested that these two sets of papers formed the “nucleus” of an archives “that will touch on the activities of Catholics and of the church especially in the United States.”<sup>5</sup>

graphical focus of the researcher.

In 1948 the Committee on Archives and Manuscripts set up to establish the new Catholic University Archives set out a collecting policy that tread cautiously through the institutional “turf” of the church. The archives, the Committee stated, should collect “non printed documents pertaining to the history of the Catholic church, especially in the United States [including] the letters, diaries, notebooks, etc., of Catholic clerics or laymen whose papers pertain to the official records of no existing institution or one unable to care for them [or] the records of any Catholic

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5. Monsignor Francis Weber, “Catholic University Archives,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, Volume LXXVII, no. 1 (March 1966) pp. 51-53; Rev. Henry J. Browne, “The

That the papers of two labor leaders with only a tenuous connection to the church should form the “nucleus” of a new archives devoted to preserving documentary heritage of American Catholicism is not as odd as it sounds. Practically, as we noted earlier, most archives collections have been built passively and serendipitously — by what appears at the door rather than what is sought out. It is neither scientific nor desirable, but has been the most common way archives have accumulated collections.

It also made some sense in terms of Browne’s own interests and understanding of American Catholic history. Browne, a student of Ellis, wrote his dissertation on the relationship between the church and Powderly’s union, the Knights of Labor, the great labor union of the 1880s. Browne himself would later become a great advocate of social reform. For him, then, these papers made sense as Catholic collections since they “touch[ed]” on the lives of hundreds of thousands of working class Catholics and vital issues of Catholic reform.<sup>6</sup>

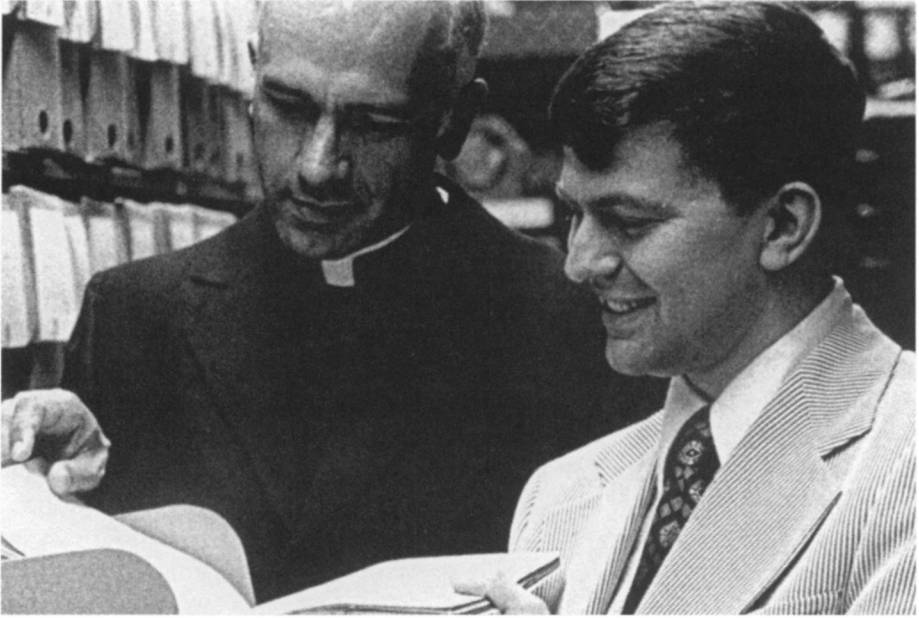
Browne was not alone at Catholic University in seeing the work of labor unions and their leaders as critical elements of American Catholic history. Catholic University had long been home to a number of “scholar activists”: Rev. William Kerby, Monsignor John A. Ryan, Monsignor (later Bishop) Francis Haas, and Monsignor Paul Hanly Furfey. These priests were all vitally interested in defining a Catholic social doctrine relevant to the problems of industrialization and urbanization. Most were also actively involved in promoting reforms: Kerby helped form the National Conference of Catholic Charities; Ryan would become known as both the father of the minimum wage and the “Right Reverend New Dealer” for his aggressive reform advocacy; and Haas was both a strong supporter of the New Deal and one of its most important labor mediators. Haas, in fact, had been instrumental in securing the Powderly and Mitchell papers for the University.

The archives for several years would follow in the direction set at the beginning. It would continue to accept the records and papers of unions and union leaders: the Congress of Industrial Organizations, Philip Murray, John Brophy, Richard Deverall, Daniel Joseph Keenan and others. It would also begin to collect the personal papers of important Catholic figures. These, of course, were diverse. New collections included, for example, the papers of faculty members like Monsignor Peter Guilday and Monsignor John Montgomery Cooper, the nation’s leading Catholic anthropologist and a pioneer in religious education. Other collections were donated to the university such as the papers and arti-

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Department of Archives and Manuscripts (Not for release, but for private circulation only, pending formal opening),” Library folder, Administrative records, ACUA.

6. Henry J. Browne, *The Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor* (New York: Arno press, 1976, republished from 1949); Browne, Catholic University Archives.



***Msgr. Robert Trisco, (Archivist, 1959-1962) with George Hruneni, (Archivist, 1974-1979)***

facts of Rev. Eli John Washington Lindesmith, missionary and army chaplain on the Montana frontier of the 1880s. Some were sought out. Rev. Monsignor Robert Trisco, one time archivist, longtime chairman of the Archives Committee, and professor of church history at the University, for example, acquired the Vatican Council II papers of several Council participants and observers in 1966. The university's long tradition of social-activist scholars was particularly well represented in the archives collection: Monsignor John A. Ryan's papers came to the archives in 1950, just a year after it opened; and Bishop Francis Haas' papers came here but a few years later. Through the end of the 1960s then the strength of the Catholic University Archives collections were the papers and records of labor leaders and unions, and the personal papers of Catholic intellectuals and social activists.

What was almost entirely missing from the collection from the beginning were diocesan records or the papers of Catholic bishops acting as heads of dioceses. The archives made no effort to seek out diocesan records or bishops papers, and even seemed eager to divest itself of papers that properly belonged in diocesan hands. Peter Guilday, as noted, had acquired papers of Archbishop John Hughes of New York and Bishop John England of Charleston, South Carolina, but those manuscripts were returned to those dioceses (However, a microfilm copy of the Hughes papers was made and kept by the archives).



Many of the collections of personal papers brought into the archives include information useful to researchers working in local Catholic history: for instance, Lindesmith's papers have extensive material documenting Catholic life in the Ohio parishes and Montana army posts where he worked. Yet in most of the collections of personal papers, information on local Catholic history is incidental to the bulk of the materials documenting careers made as social activists or academics on a national stage; among John A. Ryan's papers are notebooks and journals from his seminary days in St. Paul Minnesota, but most of his collection reflects his work as Catholic social activist and theorist; and John Montgomery Cooper's files include sermons he gave as a curate in Washington, D.C., parishes, but the bulk of his papers reflect his work as an anthropologist and religious educator. In the case of Francis Haas, who became bishop of Grand Rapids, Michigan, some speeches and sermons from his episcopacy are included in his papers, but none of his official records or correspondence as bishop. In 1972, the archives received the papers of Bishop Aloysius Muench from the Diocese of Fargo, North Dakota, and those papers included his correspondence as bishop of the diocese. Those letters and reports, however, constitute but five linear feet of a collection of over eighty linear feet; the bulk of the papers focus on his career as a Vatican diplomat. Up to the late 1960s, then, researchers into local or diocesan history would have found only bits and pieces of information scattered through a host of personal papers in the Catholic University Archives. The university began its career resolutely committed to avoiding collection of institutional records of the church that more properly belonged in the dioceses or religious order houses that created them, and it continued to maintain that stance through the first twenty years of its existence.

There was one major exception, however, and it would be harbinger of future developments that would completely revolutionize the University's collection. In 1952, just three years after its opening, the archives accepted the first deposit of records of the National Catholic War Council. The following year it would take all of the Council's records.

Until the twentieth century the Catholic Church in America had no single, consistent voice to represent it in national affairs. Bishops met in councils in 1852, 1866, and 1884, for example, to consider and address common problems, but such meetings occurred infrequently and episodically. The organization of the American Federation of Catholic Societies in 1901 did little to encourage national cohesiveness. Much of the American hierarchy was indifferent to the Federation or even hostile to it, and it was troubled by ethnic infighting. As historians Samuel Hays, Robert Wiebe and others have pointed out, however, there was a powerful trend in American life at the turn of the century towards organization on a national scale. The rise of new systems of transportation and communication knit together a national economy and,

increasingly, a national culture, and the power of the federal government grew in turn. Groups thus sought to concentrate at the national level lest their interests be ignored or overwhelmed. In Hays' words it was "organize or perish." This was as true of churches as other groups: in 1908, for example, mainstream Protestant churches formed the Federal Council of Churches. Some Catholics worried about their increasing vulnerability, fragmented by region and ethnicity. Bishop William Russell of South Carolina voiced his concerns in the 1910s:

For a generation at least, the conviction has been crystallizing in the minds of Catholics, both clergy and laity, that there is need of an authorized Catholic agency at Washington, whose purposes will be to safeguard Catholic principles from being undermined, and Catholic interests from being disregarded through Federal legislation, that is inspired by irreligion or open antagonism to the church . . . the Catholic body by reason of its numbers and its prominent men is one that ought to be taken into account by the national government [but] we have been in relation to the forces that stand in opposition to us somewhat like China at the mercy of Japan.<sup>7</sup>

Still, there was little impetus towards creating a more effective, consistent voice for the church in the United States until World War I. Then church leaders worried about being left out of the national mobilization effort, and, eager to encourage and direct proofs of Catholic loyalty, they moved to create a National Catholic War Council. The War Council, formed after two meetings at Catholic University in 1917, engaged in a wide range of activities, representing Catholic interests in Congress, ministering to troops at home and abroad, fostering Americanization of recent immigrants and developing a Program for the Reconstruction of American society after the war.

So ephemeral, so focused on the specific issue of war mobilization, the War Council might be easily overlooked by researchers and thus its records might be as well, but the War Council's papers are a treasure trove for historians of American Catholic history. Elizabeth McKeown has written an excellent account of the council's creation and its critical importance as the first national organization representing the American Catholic hierarchy. Yet the broad and diverse activities of the war council and what they reveal about American Catholics at the beginning of the twentieth century remain to be explored. The Committee on Men's Activities, for example, directed and coordinated the war and postwar reconstruction work of Catholic men's societies throughout the

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7. Samuel P. Hays, *The Response to Industrialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958) pp. 48-70; Robert Weibe, *The Search for Order* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); William T. Russell, Confidential Communication to the Archbishops, n.d. 1918 (?), National Catholic War Council, Burke's files, Box 21, folder 22, ACUA.

nation. In doing this work, the Men's Committee sought information on over 9,000 Catholic men's clubs, fraternal society branches or other organizations throughout the nation. Sometimes this information included only the names of the officers of each club or local branch or division of national organizations. The Committee, for example, solicited names of officers for Ancient Order of Hibernians divisions and Catholic Order of Forester branches. At other times these inquiries produced much richer material. The Committee's survey of Holy Name Societies across the nation prompted the Archdiocese of New York's Holy Name Union to send them its 1918 Annual Report. The report not only listed each society in each parish in the Archdiocese and its officers, but also the number of members in each branch. Perhaps even more intriguing sources for local or diocesan history are the reports the Committee commissioned on each diocese in the nation, its war council and war mobilization efforts. These reports varied in depth and the kinds of information they provide, but some are surprisingly candid and rich. Surveys of the cities in the Diocese of Altoona, for example, noted of Johnstown, Pennsylvania that the local Knights of Columbus had practically "no big men in the order," that "parish jealousies" hindered cooperation among Holy Name Societies, and that the Sodality Union "has done some fine work in teaching Italians their religion."<sup>8</sup> Reports from the city of Altoona offered similar candid assessments of that city's Catholic organizations and their needs.

The Women's Committee of the War Council was, if anything, more active than the men's. The Women's Committee established community houses in cities across the country. These houses modeled on settlement houses provided education and social services and encouraged Americanization among Catholic immigrants. The correspondence and records of these community houses offer unique insights into American Catholic social and cultural life.<sup>9</sup>

The War Council was very self conscious about the role Catholics played in the war and the ways that participation could improve the image of Catholics in the eyes of non Catholic Americans. The Council thus formed a Committee on Historical Records to document their role. Among its many activities, the Committee on Historical Records sought to find the names of every Catholic man or woman who served overseas by surveying every parish in the nation. That survey produced records now preserved in over thirty five rolls of microfilm. The War Council's records are thus a rich resource for the history of dioceses during the war, though again as a complement to, not a substitute for,

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8. Elizabeth McKeown, *War and Welfare: American Catholics and World War I* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988); Men's Committee, National Catholic War Council, Box 4; Box 5, Folder 19; Box 6, Folder 2, ACUA.

9. Women's Committee, National Catholic War Council, Box 19, ACUA.

diocesan records themselves. More than that they provide a remarkably complete and detailed “snapshot” of the American Catholic people at a critical moment in their history.

The War Council’s records came to the Archives without fanfare in 1952. The national Catholic Welfare Conference was frankly eager to give them up. As the Assistant General Secretary of the Welfare Conference confessed: “It happens that we are hard pressed for storage space.” On the archives part, accepting the War Council’s records meant no breach of its collecting rules, no possible trespass of some other Catholic institution’s turf. As an organization that had legally ceased to exist since 1931, the War Council fit the Archives Committee’s category of a “defunct” organization. Henry Browne would later claim that the War Council’s records had been promised to the University when the council had been founded in meetings on campus there during the war. Yet that argument came after the university had received the papers, not before. In all, though Browne and John Tracy Ellis helped the University acquire the War Council’s records, they did not seem very enthusiastic about them, and they languished in the Archives for many years with little attention from scholars.<sup>10</sup>

At war’s end the War Council metamorphosed into the National Catholic Welfare Council, renamed the National Catholic Welfare Conference in 1923, and reorganized and renamed in 1966 the United States Catholic Conference — National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The transition from a temporary national organization representing the bishops to a permanent one was not easy. It was one thing for some bishops and the Vatican to tolerate this potential rival to their authority when there was a shortlived crisis; another to permit the establishment of such a potential rival permanently. Nevertheless, the National Catholic Welfare Conference survived and blossomed into the single most important organization in the Catholic Church in America through the middle years of the twentieth century. It became the principal lobbying arm for the church with the federal government, and as that government’s power grew, its did too. In its early days it fought against federal aid to education bills for fear that they would impose government controls on private schools. Later it would fight for funding for parochial schools. It would serve as the forum for bishops to discuss common problems and the mechanism for them to issue their pastoral letters and judgements on critical issues to the nation. From 1919 to 1961, they would issue no less than fifty-five such letters. The Welfare

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10. Monsignor Paul F. Tanner, National Catholic Welfare Conference, to John Tracy Ellis, January 14, 1952, NCWC Accession folder 1, Administrative files, ACUA; “Information fragments taken from Archives and Manuscript Committee Meetings, Rector Reports of the Archivist, Memos etc. that give information on the transmittal and scope of the NCWC-USCC Records to CU and their subsequent handling,” NCWC Accession folder 1, Administrative files, ACUA.

Conference would grow to include eight departments: Executive, Social Action, Education, Press, Legal, Lay Organizations, Immigration and Youth as well as several bureaus and adjuncts such as the Latin American Bureau, the National Catholic Community Service and the Office of United Nations Affairs attached to either the Executive or Social Action departments. These departments would promote Catholic teaching, develop and distribute publications, issue national guidelines, provide training and provide national coordination for hosts of local Catholic societies. The Social Action Department, headed by the famed John A. Ryan for its first years, for example, would sponsor industrial conferences throughout America to encourage interest in Catholic social teaching, conduct labor schools, encourage inter American cooperation on education and labor issues, and produce *Yardstick*, weekly Catholic commentary on social issues.<sup>11</sup>

John Tracy Ellis and Henry Browne recognized the potential importance of the Welfare Conference papers early on. If they were indifferent, or only mildly excited by the War Council records, an organization long dead and buried, they understood that the Welfare Conference was a permanent and increasingly significant feature of American Catholic life. Indeed, in 1947, even before there was a Catholic University Archives, Ellis had written to NCWC officials urging them to consider establishing their own archives. He even proposed Browne for the job.<sup>12</sup>

It would be twenty years, however, before serious efforts were made again to preserve these records. A conjunction of circumstances prompted these efforts. The reorganization of the old Welfare Conference into the dual organizations of the United States Catholic Conference and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1966 created a neat break in the continuity of the organization and its offices and thus also in their files. As it often does in organizations, this break prompted many both inside and outside the conference to think of disposing of the old records.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile historian's interests in the papers had grown. In the mid-1960s Ph.D. candidate, Dennis Robb, used the NCWC's records while researching his dissertation on American Catholic lay movements in the twentieth century. Robb was impressed by the quality of the papers, but concerned about their care, and sent a letter to then Bishop Joseph Bernardin of USCC — NCCB in 1969 urging the Conference to set up a program to take better care of the

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11. Hugh J. Nolan, ed. *Pastoral Letters of the American Hierarchy* (Huntington Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1971).

12. John Tracy Ellis to Rt. Rev. Howard J. Carroll, June 18, 1947; Howard Carroll to John Tracy Ellis June 24, 1947; John Tracy Ellis to Archbishop John T. McNicholas, December 2, 1947, NCWC Accession folder 1, Administrative files, ACUA.

13. Bishop Paul F. Tanner, "Memorandum: Follow Up Steps on Corporate Reorganization," December 21, 1966, NCWC Accession folder 1, Administrative files, ACUA.

records. Professor David O'Brien of the College of the Holy Cross had been encouraging the American Catholic Historical Association to take a more active role in promoting the study of American Catholicism at the same time. In a letter to Monsignor Trisco in 1969, he pointed to the rising interest in the subject among "young scholars scattered around the country." A year later as chairman of an American Catholic Historical Association committee on American history, O'Brien would urge the USCC to take steps to preserve their records.<sup>14</sup>

In April of 1972 at Robb's instance, a group of historians, archivists, and others met at the Spring meeting of the American Catholic Historical Association to discuss the NCWC records. They agreed to express their concern about preserving these invaluable papers and their willingness to help the Conference find a proper home for them. They asked Monsignor Trisco to inform Bishop Bernardin of the NCWC of their interest and also to ask if there could be a "preliminary examination" of the records. The USCC granted such permission and a committee of historians, librarians, and archivists was formed to evaluate the NCWC papers and consider options for their disposition; the committee, chaired by Rev. Thomas Blantz, CSC, it included John Tracy Ellis of the University of San Francisco, Jay Dolan and Philip Gleason of Notre Dame, James Riley of Marquette and Lloyd Wagner, Robert Trisco and Moreau Chambers of Catholic University.<sup>15</sup>

While interest in the papers rose within the history profession, Professor Dorothy Mohler of the National Catholic School of Social Service at Catholic University had become concerned about both the NCWC records and the papers of the National Conference of Catholic Charities. Mohler, who was a member of the Catholic University Archives Committee, was interested in creating a Catholic social welfare archives at the school. In August of 1970, Mohler initiated and chaired a meeting on the Welfare Conference's records at Catholic University. Attending the meeting were Dr. Clarke A. Chambers of the University of Minnesota's Social Welfare Archives; Rev. Edwin B. Neill, Associate General Secretary of NCCB; Rev. James Rausch, Associate General Secretary of the United States Catholic Conference; Dr. Lloyd Wagner,

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14. Moreau B. Chambers to Dennis Robb, August 8 and 23 1968; Dennis Robb to Moreau B. Chambers, October 14, 1968; Moreau B. Chambers to Mr. L.F. Wagner "Memorandum: Comments and Suggestions embodied in October 14 letter from D.M. Robb," October 21, 1968; Moreau B. Chambers, "Memorandum for the Files," June 10, 1969; Mimeograph Copy of Memorandum sent on June 4, 1969 to Bishop Bernardin, General Secretary of the United States Catholic Conference, by Professor Dennis Robb of Marquette University; Professor David O'Brien to Monsignor Robert Trisco, August 18, 1969, NCWC Accession folder 1, Administrative Files, ACUA.

15. Lloyd F. Wagner, "Memo for File" March 6, 1972; Dennis M. Robb to Rev. Robert Trisco, March 2, 1972; James Riley to Lloyd Wagner March 15, 1972; Moreau B. Chambers to Rev. Thomas Blantz, March 27, 1972; Thomas Blantz, Minutes of Meeting of April 7, 1972, NCWC Accession folder 1, Administrative files, ACUA.

Director of Libraries at Catholic University; and Moreau B. Chambers, Catholic University Archivist. Clarke Chambers endorsed the importance of the papers at the meeting, and also urged that if they were deposited in archives they should not be broken up among several institutions but kept together to make research easier for historians. Neill noted that the Conference had tried to have the records appraised but the archivist contracted to do it, the famous Dr. T.V. Schellenberg, had died before the project could proceed. Neill stated that he was also aware of the increasing interest of historians in the records, but expressed concerns about insuring proper confidentiality of the papers. The meeting ended without resolution, and the question of Catholic University's role in the preservation of the papers, in particular, was left "unanswered." Trisco, Mohler and Wagner, however, remained interested in the papers, and Catholic University's Archives would continue to be a prime candidate for the disposition of the records. The university's chances became all the better when the records were moved to the campus in October of 1972 to facilitate Blantz's committee's examination of them.<sup>16</sup>

While that committee was still pondering options for the papers' disposition, the bishops' administrative committee of the United States Catholic Conference decided to deposit the papers formally in the Catholic University Archives. Many in Blantz's committee had been interested in breaking up the collection and distributing its parts to several institutions with active archival programs. This might relieve the financial burden on any one university. Marquette University had already received the Catholic Association for International Peace Records of the Social Action Department. In the end, the bishops, citing that "it is the only university in the country supported by substantial funding from the bishops," perhaps heeding Clarke Chambers' advice to keep the papers together or the interest of Catholic University expressed by Trisco, Wagner and Mohler, or noting the convenience of the University's Washington location, or simply yielding to a *fait accompli*, left the papers at Catholic University. In 1974 the Conference signed an agreement with Catholic University, officially depositing them there, but imposing a twenty-five year access rule on researchers and retaining ownership of them.<sup>17</sup>

The National Catholic Welfare Conference records are probably the single most important body of extant papers for studying the Catholic Church in twentieth century America. Though descended from the War Council, the

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16. Dorothy Bird Daly to Monsignor Lawrence J. Corcoran, June 12, 1972, Catholic Charities USA Accession folder, Administrative files, ACUA; Notes by Moreau B. Chambers on Meeting of August 4, 1970; Lloyd F. Wagner to Archives Committee, October 2, 1972; Moreau B. Chambers, "Memorandum to the File: USCC Deposited on 5 Oct 72," NCWC Accession folder 1, Administrative files, ACUA.

17. Copy of the Minutes of the Administrative Board, United States Catholic Conference, February 12-13, 1974, pp. 23-24, NCWC Accession folder 1, Administrative files, ACUA.

Welfare Conference's records differed from the old War Council's. The latter, as noted, attempted systematically to survey Catholic participation in the war effort and established a number of its own community houses or servicemen's centers. The Welfare Council attempted no such systematic surveying, nor did it establish its own local organizations. Nevertheless, the Welfare Council's papers in their own way, like the War Council's records, are richly useful for studying trends in American Catholic history. Like the War Council's papers, however, they are a complement to diocesan and parish records in the study of local Catholic history, not a substitute for them. They offer an expanded view of how individual dioceses fit into broad national or regional trends rather than documents or individual dioceses or localities in depth.

The principal role of the Welfare Conference was to represent the bishops of the United States on issues of national import. A governing administrative board of seven and then later ten bishops oversaw the NCWC's actions and the archives has six volumes (three linear feet) of the minutes of their meetings from 1919 to 1966 as well as five volumes (2.7 linear feet) of the minutes of the general meetings of the bishops from 1919 to 1965. Though several important bishops served on or chaired the administrative board — Schrembs, Muldoon, Hanna, Stritch, and Mooney, for example — the archives has the NCWC files of only one of them: Archbishop John T. McNicholas of Cincinnati. This small set of papers is, nonetheless, important, for it includes among other material, McNicholas' files as a member of the Episcopal Committee on Motion Pictures.

The absence of any of the bishops' personal files should not suggest a dearth of episcopal correspondence in the Welfare Conference records. Indeed, the records are abundant with communications and discussions between bishops and the NCWC staff, particularly the General Secretary but also members of the Conference's many departments, on a wide range of issues. Education was a consistently important question. The NCWC's efforts to counter the Oregon School law banning parochial schools in 1922, for example, prompted extensive correspondence between Rev. John Burke, C.S.P., the general secretary, and bishops around the country. Archbishop Christie of Portland, for example, wrote emotionally about the need for national help for his fight: "The fight must not be lost, for it means not only our ruin here if the measure becomes a law, but its adoption will signalize [sic] a similar campaign in every other state where this propaganda of anti Catholicism exists. This is the situation. It is critical, imminent and inescapable. There is no time to be lost, for the work is complicated and difficult."

In the late 1940s when the Supreme Court was debating "released time" programs in public schools, the General Secretary surveyed released time rules in dioceses across the country. With the rise of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s, the bishops, like the nation at large, focused more and more on the



thorny issues of race relations. Several southern bishops reported to assistant director of the Welfare Conference's Social Action Department, Rev. John Cronin, S.S., in 1956, for example, on, among other things, white segregationist attempts to discipline fellow whites through economic boycotts. Southern bishops also wrote to Cronin expressing mixed emotions about a Rockefeller Foundation program to train Catholic priests to facilitate desegregation. Though it would be difficult to search for the opinions of a single bishop through the Welfare Conference records, it is, still the best possible source to discover the bishops' opinions about particular issues.<sup>18</sup>

Several NCWC departments, the Youth Department, the Education Department, and two sections of the Lay Organizations Department — the National Councils of Catholic Women and Men — carried on extensive correspondence with dioceses. One of the principal roles of the Youth Department was to coordinate Catholic Youth Organizations (CYO) throughout the nation. Records for the Youth Department thus contain correspondence with each diocese, often including lists of parish and school CYO councils affiliated with the national federation, as well as some letters and reports discussing CYO activities undertaken in the diocese. In 1966, for example, Rev. Richard Stohr, Director of the CYO in the Seattle Archdiocese, wrote to the Welfare Conference describing an "excellent new program," Seattle's CYO teenager of the month, just introduced into his diocese. The CYO files also include general correspondence and reports on the organization of CYO conventions, sponsorship of "youth week," and miscellaneous publications, including *Vision*, a magazine aimed at diocesan and parish CYO directors.<sup>19</sup>

The Education Department, particularly the Confraternity for Christian Doctrine, also has an extensive diocesan-correspondence series. This is a rich resource for investigating Catholic religious education in dioceses and parishes across the country. There is, for example, substantive correspondence between diocesan CCD directors and the Welfare Conference about reviewing and updating the NCWC's publications. There are also letters from directors recounting CCD activities in their dioceses. On March 3, 1955, Rev. William V. Higgins of the Diocese of Mobile wrote to the Welfare Conference reporting that his office had set up a booth and a portable chapel at the state fair. Thirty thousand people visited the booth, Higgins noted, and "for most of

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18. Archbishop Christie to Rev. John J. Burke, July 13, 1922,, Box 14, folder 5, ACUA; Father McManus, "Memorandum to Cardinal Stritch, November 8, 1947," Box 14, folder 20, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Records of the General Secretary, ACUA. Bishop Richard O. Gerow to Fr. John F. Cronin, February 23, 1956; Bishop Charles Greco to Rev. John F. Cronin, October 27, 1956; Bishop Albert Fletcher to Rev. John F. Cronin, July 11, 1958 Box 89, folder 3, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Social Action Department, ACUA.

19. Rev. Richard Stohr to Monsignor Joseph Scheider, May 29, 1955 and February 18, 1960, Box 37, Archdiocese of Seattle folder, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Youth Department, ACUA.

these [people] this was their first contact with anything Catholic.” The correspondence in the CCD files includes more than letters and reports from diocesan directors. Indeed, in the New York and Newark diocesan files, there are numerous letters from parish CCD teachers or even lay men and women seeking reading lists, pamphlets or even just advice on how to teach religion to the Catholic children in their charge. On March 27, 1964, for example, Mrs. Laurel Marro of North Bergen, New Jersey, wrote to the Welfare Conference: “I would like to know when I should start to teach my son religion and prayers.”<sup>20</sup>

The National Councils of Catholic Women and Men also have diocesan series among their records. The Council on Catholic Women, for example, recorded basic information about Catholic women’s organizations — name of organization, officers, and address — in every diocese, on file cards. For most dioceses the cards extend from the early 1920s to the 1960s. For the Diocese of Green Bay, for example, the cards listed a Catholic Women’s Club for Oneonto, Wisconsin; the St. Mary’s Altar Society in St. Mary’s parish in Peshtigo; and the St. Anne’s Christian Mothers in White Lake. The Committee on Catholic Men’s records also included a diocesan series. The folder for Helena, Montana included copies of Diocesan Council of Catholic Men newsletters from the early 1960s and letters from the 1960s and early 1970s discussing the establishment of parish councils.<sup>21</sup>

The National Catholic Welfare Conference files like the War Council records thus contain a substantial amount of information about the local life of the church in its dioceses and parishes. Again, however, they are not a substitute for diocesan records but rather a complement. They are most useful for historians as a means of investigating specific trends in the church across several dioceses or the responses of many bishops to particular issues, and, thus, provide comparative context for any strictly local study.<sup>22</sup>

Soon after the acquisition of the Welfare Conference files, Catholic University became the official depository of both the National Conference of Catholic Charities (or Catholic Charities U.S.A.) and the National Catholic Education Association. Both organizations had been founded at Catholic

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20. Rev. William Higgins to Rev. John Kelley, March 3, 1955, Box 5, Diocese of Mobile folder; Mrs. Laurel Marro to CCD National Center, March 27, 1964, Box 5 Archdiocese of Newark folder, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Youth Department, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, ACUA. See also Archdioceses of Newark and New York folders for letters from parish and school religious educators, Box 5, Youth Department, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, ACUA.

21. Interparochial “Catholic Women’s Club” Oneonto; St. Mary’s Altar Society, St. Mary’s Parish Peshtigo; St. Anne’s Christian Mothers Club, White Lake: Box 26, Diocese of Green Bay file cards, National Catholic Welfare Conference, National Council of Catholic Women, ACUA

22. Richard H. Dement to Bishop Hunthausen, March 1, 1971; Newsletter, March 21, 1962, Box 9, Diocese of Helena folder, National Catholic Welfare Conference, National Council of Catholic Men, ACUA.

University in the early twentieth century, but their files did not come to the Archives until the late 1970s. Both sets of records like the Welfare Conference files offer information on Catholic charitable and educational trends from a broad national perspective. They are, again, then, less useful for examining such trends in any one diocese as examining such trends in all or a substantial proportion of them.

The National Conference of Catholic Charities was formed at the Catholic University of America in 1910. Its organization reflected two important trends of the Progressive era: concentration of organization at the national level and the professionalization of social service or charitable work. The NCCC's early efforts focused on the organization of Catholic charities at the diocesan level, the establishment of Catholic schools of social work, and the formal integration of social institutions managed by religious sisters. NCCC became a major advocate for progressive social legislation regarding immigration, housing, child care, and family assistance, and major activities included work with refugees, health care, juvenile delinquency, and unmarried mothers. The name was changed to Catholic Charities USA in 1986 to demonstrate that the organization, now a centralized and professional network of over 600 agencies and affiliated institutions, was still dedicated to the emphasis of service to people.

In 1966 Rev. Michael Hall, OSB, Catholic University Archivist, wrote to the national Conference of Catholic Charities to ask about the papers of the Rev. John O'Grady, the secretary of the conference for over forty years. O'Grady had been a close colleague of John Ryan, and Hall believed his papers would be a rich addition to Ryan's, William Kerby's and Francis Haas' papers already in the archives. Conference executives believed that the O'Grady papers could not be separated from the conference's own records and were not yet ready to dispose of those papers. In 1969 the University of Minnesota inquired into the disposition of the conference's records for their prestigious Social Welfare Archives. Marquette University was also rumored to be interested in the papers at that time. Through the work of Dorothy Mohler and Dean Dorothy Bird Daly of the National Catholic School of Social Services at Catholic University, the papers were pledged to Catholic University at the annual meeting of the conference's directors in October of 1972. The records would not begin to come to the university until 1977 and, as with the Welfare Conference materials, the Conference retained ownership of its records.<sup>23</sup>

Ironically, though the Conference of Catholic Charities represented diocesan-

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23. Rev. Michael Hall OSB to Lawrence J. Corcoran, January 24, 1966; Daly to Corcoran, June 12, 1972; Mimeograph copy of Minutes of Annual Meeting of Board of Directors of National Conference of Catholic Charities, Miami, Florida, October 9, 1972; Dorothy Mohler to Dr. Hruneni, April 6, 1976; Anthony Zito, Survey of NCCC Records, August 26, 1977: Catholic Charities Accession folder, Administrative files, ACUA

san Catholic charities workers across the country and was devoted to serving their needs, very few of its records series are arranged by diocese. There are voluminous general subject files as well as records of the women's conference of religious and study and survey files with material of diocesan relevance but none are organized by diocese. The studies and surveys in the latter file are listed in only a general sense by subject matter or organized by state, not by diocese; so the researcher would have to browse these in some detail to find relevant documents. They can yield important local information, however; for example there is a study of the aged in St. Louis from 1953 to 1955. There is also substantial material, about nineteen linear feet, on the annual meetings of diocesan directors of Catholic Charities agencies, but these documents are not arranged by diocese, but rather, as might be expected, chronologically by meeting. Thus there is a folder on the directors' annual meeting of 1948 with copies of resolutions passed on the treatment of war refugees, "displaced persons," and chaplains in mental hospitals. Similarly, the folder on the 1951 meeting includes reports documenting passage of resolutions on such subjects as "Catholic Organizations and the Day Care of Children." The Catholic Charities records do include about six linear feet of diocesan directories and publications, and, more interestingly, about one and half linear feet of studies conducted by conference staff members in the 1960s of diocesan charities bureaus and agencies, in such dioceses as Denver, Covington and Atlanta. The study of the latter, for example, was done in 1962, and is entitled "Study of the Present and Future Social Welfare Needs of the Archdiocese of Atlanta." Overall, the NCCC papers run to some 250 feet, much of which would contain material of some diocesan relevance but only to the discerning and hardworking investigator.<sup>24</sup>

The nation's oldest and largest Catholic education organization, the National Catholic Education Association, was founded in 1904 from the merger of the Educational Conference of Seminary Faculties, Association of Catholic Colleges, and the Parish School Conference. Catholic University Rector Thomas J. Conaty was the moving force behind its creation and Reverend Francis Howard served as first executive officer. Early efforts, largely in conjunction with the NCWC Department of Education, fostered cooperation with non-Catholics and the integration of scientific methods with traditional Catholic pedagogy, while more recent activities have addressed the immense changes and re evaluation fomented by the Vatican II Council. The administrative structure includes the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU), Chief Administrators of Catholic Education (CACE)

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24. October 1948 and April 1951 folders, Box 48, Annual Meeting of Catholic Charities Directors files, National Conference of Catholic Charities, ACUA; Box 197, Diocesan Agency Studies, National Conference of Catholic Charities, ACUA.

and departments of Elementary, Secondary, Special, and Seminary education.

Little is known about the acquisition of NCEA's records by the University. In 1979, Dr. Alice Gallin, OSU, of the ACUA, raised the question of the disposition of NCEA's records at an Association staff meeting. Gallin and Dr. John Meyers, President of the NCEA, met with Rev. Robert Trisco and Anthony Zito, the University Archivist, shortly thereafter. Later that year the NCEA signed a contract with what had now become the standard stipulation that the NCEA would retain ownership of the records. In 1981 the first shipment of records was sent to the archives.<sup>25</sup>

Records on deposit at the Catholic University Archives include administrative records of the first five presidents, the Annual Conventions, ACCU, and the Seminary Department. In addition, recent but as yet unprocessed material includes the files of Chief Administrators of Catholic Education (CACE), and departments of Elementary, Secondary, Special, Service and Religious education. Diocesan material is well represented in a general sense throughout the various levels of this organization, but NCEA like Catholic Charities and the Welfare Conference, is an organization with a national focus, and almost none of the records series in the NCEA files are arranged by diocese. There are regional and state divisions within the various departments: CACE, made up of superintendents of Catholic schools and directors of Religious Education is organized regionally, and the Religious Education Department contains sections addressing both parish and diocesan educators. Yet a quick survey of these as yet unprocessed records does not reveal any diocesan, state or regional arrangements of the records. The Service Department addresses issues relating to business and the annual convention as well as membership and a research and data bank. Its last section, the data bank, includes studies and surveys on the diocesan level. Because of recent heavy activity in the transfer of archives from NCEA to CUA, access to much of the unprocessed NCEA collection, while possible, may be difficult.

Several other collections came into the archives in the 1970s that contain useful information on local Catholic history. In 1976 John P. Garra, Executive Director of the Catholic Interracial Council of New York wrote to Dr. Clarence Walton, President of Catholic University, suggesting that "we would be interested in transferring [our] records to an appropriate archives center." Walton wrote back noting the large number of social action collections in the Archives and argued: "we feel strongly that the papers of the Catholic Interracial Council of New York would complement our holdings." In April of 1977, the Interracial Council voted unanimously to send to the archives its letters, publi-

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25. Handwritten notes by the Archivist, February 12, March 7, May 16, June 22, 1979; John F. Meyers to Rev. Anthony Zito, July 18, 1979; Accession Record 82-10, December 12, 1981: National Catholic Education Association accession folder, Administrative files, ACUA.

cations and pictures documenting the Council's activities from its founding in the 1930s by John LaFarge to the 1970s.<sup>26</sup>

Shortly thereafter in 1978, the Christ Child Society sent its records to the University along with the personal papers of its founder, Mary Virginia Merrick. The Christ Child Society grew out of early charitable efforts by Merrick and her friends to provide toys and clothes for poor children in Washington D.C. and became a large national service organization with settlement houses and a summer camp in the nation's capital and other service programs in cities like Cleveland, Chicago, Omaha and Council Bluffs, Iowa. The bulk of the records document the Washington chapter's activities and include some interesting information into early Catholic social service in a racially mixed environment. There are, for example, financial records and minutes from the 1920s for the Society's "Colored Auxiliary: Holy Name Guild" in Washington. There is some correspondence with the other chapters as well, however. Folders for the Detroit and Chicago branches in the 1950s include the newsletters of both chapters and letters and reports detailing their charitable and fundraising activities.<sup>27</sup>

The growth of the Catholic University's archival collections was the product of a complicated historical process. Catholic University Archivists, the Archives committee, and the University faculty and staff were important in shaping that growth, but it was also shaped by changes in the church and its institutions, the transformation of the history and archival professions, and turf struggles and negotiations. It seems clear, in retrospect, that collecting for the University Archives took a dramatic turn in the early 1970s when the USCC deposited its old Welfare Conference records in the archives. Thereafter what had been largely a collection of labor union records and personal papers became the major repository for the church in America's most important national organizations. In the end, however, after all the twists and turns, the archives' collections are a remarkably faithful reflection of the role of Catholic University in American Catholic life. The strengths of the collections — labor and Catholic social activists on the one hand, and large national Catholic organizations on the other — reflect both the University's long tradition of Catholic social activism and its place as the nation's Catholic University. Its collections thus are rich resources for the study of Catholic history, not for any one diocese or bishop, but for all or at least many of them. It has become then not a substitute or rival for diocesan archives, but along with some of its sister

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26. John J. Garra to Dr. Clarence Walton, September 27, 1976; Clarence Walton to John J. Garra October 4, 1976; John Garra to Clarence Walton, April 18, 1977, Catholic Interracial Council accession folder, Administrative files, ACUA.

27. "Colored Auxiliary: Holy Name Guild, Financial Records and Minutes, 1919-1926," Account Book, Christ Child Society, Organizational Papers of the Washington Chapter, Box 49, ACUA; Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit folders, Christ Child Society, Papers of the National Organization, Box 67, ACUA.

Catholic college and university archives, such as Marquette and Notre Dame archives, an important complement to them.\*

\*This article deals only with original sources stored in the Catholic University Archives. The archives does have microfilm copies of original materials stored elsewhere that may be useful to historians of certain dioceses or local areas. Those microfilm sources include: seven reels of the papers of Archbishop John Hughes of New York; thirteen reels of the papers of Bishop Dennis O'Connell of Richmond; sixteen reels of the papers of Archbishop Edwin O'Hara of Kansas City — St. Joseph, Missouri; three reels of the diary of Bishop Peter Muldoon of Rockford, Illinois; some thirty letters of correspondence between Cardinal Henry Edward Manning of England and American bishops; and one reel of the journal of Bishop Martin J. Spalding of Louisville. The Rare Books and special collection room of the Catholic University Library is also a rich source for American Catholic history. It includes over 3,000 parish histories, and a large collection of Catholic devotional pamphlets and books.