



Rethinking Political Catholicism: Empirical and Normative Perspectives

John Cabot University, Rome, May 22-23, 2014

Call for Papers

Although the study of religion and politics has blossomed over the past decade, the normative debates over the appropriate place of religion in modern democracies often remain divorced from the study of the actual practices and meanings of religion in these democracies. *Rethinking Political Catholicism* aims to bridge this divide by focusing on the fertile case of political Catholicism in Italy. Empirically, the conference aims to take stock of political Catholicism in Italy today, compare it with Catholic and Muslim politics elsewhere, and use contemporary theoretical and normative insights to better understand its post-secular dynamics. Normatively, the conference aims to evaluate the practices of contemporary political Catholicism in Italy and elsewhere, and thus contribute to developing a more sophisticated debate about the proper roles of religious politics in contemporary democracies.

The empirical papers of the conference are invited to analyse the project and impact of political Catholicism in Italy and elsewhere today. Suggested themes include the following.

- Catholic political elites' new forms of engagement in politics and the public sphere (for instance, the Todi initiative, the Monti-ACLI-Sant'Egidio alliance, CEI positions, Comunione e Liberazione coalitions);
- Continuities and discontinuities between these initiatives and twentieth-century Catholic associational life (Catholic Action, Christian Democratic parties, Catholic worker unions, and so on);
- Patterns of contemporary Catholic religious belief, and its influence on Italian electoral preferences and new Catholic movements and associations;
- The degree to which such factors indicate the emergence of a distinct, post-secular Catholic political modernity in which the Catholic Church acts as a public religion;
- Comparisons between this project and new trends in religious politics elsewhere, particularly in the Middle East/North Africa and North America.

Normative contributions to the conference are invited to consider the practice and theory of political Catholicism. They might consider such themes as the following.

- Current Catholic political groups, claims, or activism, in Italy or elsewhere;
- The normative meaning and grounds of 'political Catholicism';
- Catholic analyses of contemporary political issues;
- New challenges posed by Catholic political thought and practice to liberal democratic theory;
- The significance of the church-state relationship in Italy for theories of post-secularism;
- Comparisons with recent trends in Islamic political thought and practice.

Confirmed speakers include Paola Bernardini ([Contending Modernities Project](#), Notre Dame), Luca Diotallevi (Roma Tre), Agostino Giovagnoli (Cattolica, Milan), Ateş Altınordu (Sabanci University), and Paul Weithman (Notre Dame).

A more extensive empirical and normative research agenda for the conference can be found at the [conference webpage](#).

The working language of the conference will be English, and a collection of papers based on the conference will also be published.

The conference is part of the John Cabot University Summer Institute for Religion and Global Politics (May 19-June 20, 2014). Information about the Institute can be found [here](#).

Submission guidelines

A 500-word abstract, of a paper suitable for presentation in 20 minutes, should be sent by **March 15, 2014**, to the organizers, [Tom Bailey](mailto:tbailey@johncabot.edu) (tbailey@johncabot.edu) and [Michael Driessen](mailto:mdriessen@johncabot.edu) (mdriessen@johncabot.edu). Notice of acceptance will be provided by March 22.

Selected papers will be considered for publication in a collected volume.

Registration fee (includes lunches and refreshments): Faculty € 50, Students € 25

The conference is funded by John Cabot University.