

*Monday, 3 February 2014*

## **Cardinal Foley lecture series begins with analysis of Pope Francis' social communications**



PHILADELPHIA (SCS.edu) – To a standing room only venue filled with more than 300 guests, Bishop Timothy C. Senior opened the annual John Cardinal Foley Lecture Series on January 27 at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. The inaugural event was presented by Rev. Thomas Dailey, O.S.F.S., who holds the John Cardinal Foley Chair of Homiletics & Social Communications at the Seminary. His lecture focused on “evangelization and social communications with Pope Francis.”

Comparing the former President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and the Pontiff, Fr. Dailey drew parallels between the work of Cardinal Foley and Pope Francis in terms of their communication style, evangelical message and digital discipleship.

To connect people to the Church, Fr. Dailey demonstrated how Cardinal Foley and Pope Francis do not limit their reach by any single method of communication. Traditional techniques and contemporary tools are used simultaneously and seamlessly to reach different audiences.

Cardinal Foley was a communications pioneer, in his home Archdiocese and later to the entire Church. Fr. Dailey explained how the editor-in-chief of the Catholic Standard & Times in Philadelphia went on to lead the universal Church into the world of television and later obtained the “.va” domain designation for the Vatican.

Pope Francis had demonstrated his own unique form of communication. Using forms of speech and imaginative expressions atypical of papal teaching, he speaks with a personal authenticity that gives immediate credence to his message. The Holy Father’s candid exchanges with the media have facilitated worldwide interest in his “revolution of tenderness,” with his more than 11 million Twitter followers at the forefront of that revolution.

Drawing from Pope Francis’ first papal message for World Communications Day, Fr. Dailey noted, “The digital highway is one of those streets onto which the Church must go if she is to reach people where they are.” Pope Francis encounters the world through the use of Twitter, Facebook and other media that give his voice an instantaneous, global reach. As observed by Fr. Antonio Spadaro, the Pope is, himself a social network in as much as he turns listeners into active participants in communication events.

Fr. Dailey extended this concept of “communications as encounter” to the establishment of the John Cardinal Foley Chair of Homiletics & Social Communications. To honor the Cardinal’s life and work, this academic position will work in three critical areas. The first focuses on

priestly formation by offering theological instruction to the “digital natives” who are today’s seminarians. The second seeks to expand ecclesial participation in social media through workshops and conferences for parish staffs, religious educators and those engaged in the work of evangelization. The third facilitates professional dialogue between media specialists and academics to reflect upon the opportunities and threats emerging in today’s social communications.

Fr. Dailey ended the lecture with an invitation for all to carry on the work of Cardinal Foley and Pope Francis by being missionary disciples in the digital world, so that their voices, expressed through social media, construct a continuous, living network of person-to-person evangelizers.



The lecture was preceded by the viewing of a new documentary about Cardinal Foley produced by Catholic News Service. The evening concluded with the premiere of a YouTube infomercial about the Cardinal Foley Chair, produced by students at DeSales University in Center Valley, Pennsylvania. Both videos can be found at <http://www.scs.edu/john-cardinal-foley-chair>.

(by Laura Verdi / photos by David Anthony)