Chesterton and the Challenge of Poland

Warsaw & Krakow, Poland

SOUTH ORANGE, N.J, August 2012—The G. K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture, US with generous sponsorship of the Hon. Lady Blanka Rosenstiel and with the collaboration of Fronda Publishers, the offices of the Archbishops of Warsaw and Krakow, the Faculty of Law of the University of Warsaw, John Paul II Museum, Dystrybucjonizm.pl and the Piotr Skarga Association have the pleasure of announcing the 2012 Conference Series in Poland on the theme “Chesterton and the Challenge of Poland.” The Conference seeks to plant the intellectual seed of Chesterton in Poland; to continue to promote his life, work, ideas and writings; to be the start of a continuing Polish retreat for public intellectuals and political figures on Chestertonian themes; to invite the public in general and to have future Chesterton seminars in Poland. The conferences will be held as follows:

Krakow: Friday, October 26, 2012
Time: 2:00 – 7:00 pm
at Krakow’s Historical Museum, Market Square 6, Krakow

Warsaw: Monday, October 29, 2012
Time: 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
at Warsaw University Library, New Building, Warsaw

The programme in Krakow will also include a “Gathering of Chestertonian Friends” immediately after the conference.

For more information and to register please contact: chestertoninstitute@shu.edu or marketing@fronda.pl
For the English writer G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936), Poland stood in the forefront of European nations. Chesterton had deep admiration for its culture, traditions, history, and (above all) its heroic Christianity over many years of struggle and oppression. “Poles,” he wrote in his autobiography, “have always had a choice of evils.” Their greatness as a people, he believed, lay in their refusal to accept that choice. Polish decency and dignity moved him profoundly. Polish suffering wounded him to the core. Polish freedom and independence brought him joy. Whether free or in chains, Poland was, for Chesterton, a metaphor for all Christian nations of the 20th century. What Poland had endured, others might endure. What Poland enjoyed, others might also enjoy.

Three-quarters of a century after his death, Chesterton remains a remarkably prophetic figure. Poland today faces similar challenges, less obvious, perhaps, than invasion and conquest but no less dangerous for that. In his magnificent Pentecost sermon of June 1979 in Warsaw, Pope John Paul II invoked the Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth – this earth, this land of Poland. The subsequent history of freedom and democratic renewal in Poland delighted and inspired the world. Now, a generation on, the price of that freedom must be paid. Once more, the people of Poland are called upon to exercise that freedom responsibly, conforming their economic and political systems to moral norms that have always guided them, shaping their cultural and social lives in a manner consistent with their history and character.

Chesterton has much to say about these challenges. As one of the great writers of the century, he devoted his life to an urgent call for cultural renewal. This renewal, he argued, must be felt in every sphere of human activity: in family life, in business, in art, in literature. He believed passionately in freedom and responsibility – the great themes of Pope John Paul’s stunning pontificate. Like John Paul, he was also a man of courage who inspired courage in others.

The conference will explore the writings of Chesterton in the context of modern Poland. Rather than an exercise in history, its purpose is to suggest future directions for Poland. Speakers from Poland and the United States will examine ways in which Chesterton’s views on education, economics and the family offer guidance for Poland in the coming century. The emphasis will be on speakers from Poland, which is in keeping both with Chesterton’s philosophy and the philosophy of the Chesterton Institute.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

FR. IAN BOYD, C.S.B. is an internationally recognized Chesterton scholar and the author of The Novels of G.K. Chesterton (London 1975). For many years he was Professor of English at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan. Currently he is a member of the Department of English at Seton Hall University in South Orange, New Jersey. Father Boyd also lectures on the subject of "Sacramental Themes in Modern Literature." Among the Christian authors whose work he discusses are T.S. Eliot, Graham Greene, C.S. Lewis, Flannery O’Connor, Piers Paul Read, Muriel Spark and Evelyn Waugh. In nineteenth-century literature, he is interested in the work of such authors as Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Father Boyd is the Founder and Editor of The Chesterton Review and the President of the G.K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture based at Seton Hall University.

DR. DERmot QUINN is a Professor of History at Seton Hall University, a member of the Board of Advisors of the G. K. Chesterton Institute for Faith & Culture and a member of the Editorial Board of The Chesterton Review. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin and New College, Oxford, where
he was awarded a doctorate in 1986. He has written extensively on Chestertonian themes, has authored three books *The Irish in New Jersey: Four Centuries of American Life* (Rutgers University Press, 2004) (winner, New Jersey Studies Academic Alliance, Non-fiction Book of the Year, 2005); *Patronage and Piety: The Politics of English Roman Catholicism, 1850-1900* (Stanford University Press/Macmillan, 1993) and *Understanding Northern Ireland* (Baseline Books, Manchester, UK, 1993 and many articles and reviews in the field of British and Irish history. He was Fellow of the James Madison Program at Princeton University, Academic Year 2008-2009.

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The G. K. Chesterton Institute, a not-for profit educational organization incorporated in the United States, Canada and Great Britain, is located at Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J. Its purpose is to promote the thought of G. K. Chesterton and his circle and more broadly, to explore the application of Chestertonian ideas in the contemporary world. The Institute’s work consists of conferences, lecture series, research and writing. *The Chesterton Review*, founded in 1974, has been
widely praised both for its scholarship and for the quality of its writing. Edited by Father Ian Boyd, C. S. B., it includes a wide range of articles not only on Chesterton himself, but on the issues close to his heart in the work of other writers and in the modern world. It has devoted special issues to C. S. Lewis, George Bernanos, Hilaire Belloc, Maurice Baring, Christopher Dawson, Cardinal Manning, the Modernist Crisis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Fantasy Literature, and a Special Polish Issue. The Chesterton Review also publishes one annual issue in Spanish and an annual supplement in Portuguese and French. For information about the Institute or The Chesterton Review please contact www.shu.edu/go/chesterton

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