Inspiring Activism

By President John Garvey

O
n October 2 we announced a new affiliation with Chinese human rights activist Chen Guangcheng (see news story on page 4). Mr. Chen joins our Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies as a distinguished visiting fellow. He will also serve as a senior distinguished fellow in human rights at the Witherspoon Institute, and senior distinguished adviser focused on Internet freedom and human rights for persons with disabilities at the Lanton Foundation for Human Rights & Justice.

Mr. Chen is a human rights luminary and I am delighted that he will have a home at Catholic University. He is a self-taught lawyer who heroically defended basic human rights in China, and landed in jail for his troubles. Mr. Chen fought the Chinese government’s barbaric one-child policy and brought international attention to the horrific practice of forced abortions in China. He has actively advocated for persons with disabilities, the poor, and women. His courage is all the more impressive because he has been blind since a young age.

Mr. Chen’s commitment to protecting the rights of the poor and vulnerable resonates with our mission at Catholic University. As noted at the National Press Club conference announcing our new partnership, the Catholic Church is deeply committed to defending basic human rights. Pope John XXIII wrote in his stirring homilies.

My memory of participating in Eucharistic liturgies at Catholic U. comports with the article in the summer 2013 issue (page 20). Attending Mass at CUA contributed to the wonderful time I had as a student. Liturgy has always been of great interest to me. I love the beautiful liturgical music at Catholic U. I am certain that Catholic universities continue to enrich the graces I receive at Mass.

I have vivid memories of Mass in Caldwell Chapel. I was extremely fortunate and blessed to hear homilies from some of the most important theologians of Vatican II and the postconciliar period. (Indeed they spoiled me! I often find it difficult to be attentive to the homily at Mass.)

A substantial part of my fond memories of Mass at CUA is my recollection of Father McManus. He was the American Church’s greatest preacher in the post-conciliar period. He was theologically profound, highly theological, and challenging. I will forever miss his stirring homilies.

As a Baselian, I had the privilege of writing a dissertation about the Vita Negligens in Thomas Aquinas. Monsignor John Wipped (summer issue, page 6) was my director and offered guidance and patience during the process. By nurturing my interest in Thomistic thought, such became and remains the cornerstone of my spiritual, theological, and philosophical thinking. I congratulate Monsignor on his lifetime dedication to the Church, CUA, and the pursuit of truth.

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