



Local organizing sparks controversy

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— A Catholic speaker will reveal “the truth” about Alinskyian community organizing and its effects on the church tonight during a presentation on the University of Central Oklahoma campus, an organizer says. The Oklahoma Sponsoring Committee is a coalition of 25 congregations and nonprofit groups formed out of a sense of mission and concern for the pressures faced by Oklahoma City-area families, according to information posted at OCS’ Web site www.oksponsoring.org.

Jo Joyce, a parishioner at The Catholic Church of St. John the Baptist in Edmond, said she was part of an OSC organizing meeting, and like others there she came out of a desire to serve God by helping the poor in the community. The facilitator at the meeting described the process of forming a core team in Oklahoma City, and Joyce asked for more explanation. The facilitator asked her if she had ever done any community organizing. Joyce said that was when she heard about the Industrial Areas Foundation, which was something new to her. And the term “community organizing” spurred her into action.

Joyce said St. John’s already had many ministries to help the poor and she was not convinced that it was a necessary ministry. She researched Saul Alinsky and the IAF and said she was alarmed by what she learned. Founded by Alinsky, a labor and civil rights activist, in the late 1940s, the IAF is the center of a national network of broad-based, multi-ethnic, interfaith organizations in primarily poor and moderate-income communities.

The pioneering Chicago community organizer wrote two books on American radicalism — “Reveille for Radicals” (1946) and “Rules for Radicals” (1971). His ideas have influenced the likes of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama, who organized residents on Chicago’s South Side early in his career.

Today, the IAF has 59 local organizations in regional clusters; five of them are in the South or near-South, according to information posted at www.industrialareasfoundation.org. The IAF says it is “non-ideological and strictly non-partisan, but proudly, publicly, and persistently political.”

Joyce said her concerns include some of the causes supported by the IAF and its political leanings. She said the IAF wants to change laws and raise taxes to help the poor when the faith community already is equipped to do so.

“I feel that this is contributing in a big way to the liberal-progressive movement,” Joyce said.

Joyce said her main message is for individuals to do their own research.

The Oklahoma Sponsoring Committee contracted with the IAF to provide leadership training for its member institutions. Its certificate of incorporation was filed with the Oklahoma Secretary of State’s Office in May 2008. The IAF did not respond to a request for comment by press time Friday night. Messages seeking comment with the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City Thursday and Friday were not returned by press time.

On its Web site, the OSC states it is neither a Communist nor Socialist-related organization, that it is not affiliated with ACORN, that the OSC agenda is set by member institutions and that it is working to build stronger, more stable communities to ensure that each has their innate dignity valued and respected.

In a Sept. 13 column published in *Sooner Catholic*, Archbishop Eusebius Beltran urged those on each side to pray and study. Joyce said she and others have regularly gathered to pray.

“I have witnessed the growing conflict, which has no place in the Church,” Beltran wrote, appointed to his position in 1992. “I regret that the present historical movement in our country and indeed throughout the world

is filled with fear, distrust, anger and hostility. This negative atmosphere seems to be creeping into the Church. This should not be.”

The IAF was condemned as a “liberal political entity conspiring to seduce the churches,” Beltran wrote. In an earlier column, he acknowledged some past failures in which the IAF used “bad tactics and undue force” to meet goals. He also said interfaith groups inspired by the IAF have been formed in many dioceses and proven to be “solid and helpful.”

Beltran encouraged the committees of the six parishes representing the Catholic church to “continue their efforts of being witnesses and leaven in the world.”

He also commended local parishioners who “expressed their concern fearing potential danger or harm to the Church.” He wrote that their calling the issues to his attention increased examination and study of church teachings.

He also denounced false attacks undermining the good works of Catholic charities.

St. John’s parishioner Tom Morris spoke to The Sun Friday morning while he was heading to the prayer meeting. Morris said the church needs to change, move away from political action and return to its charitable roots.

“We’ve got to get back to our roots,” Morris said. “It’s all about Jesus.”

An opponent of Alinskyian community organizing, Stephanie Block, a member of the speaker’s bureau for the Catholic Media Coalition, will speak at 6:30 p.m. tonight at UCO’s Constitution Hall.

Joyce said other speakers will come to the metro area in the future. She said attempts to have the event at various parishes were not successful.

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The Details

What you need to know

Saul Alinski devised and proved 13 tactical rules for use against opponents vastly superior in power and wealth:

1. “Power is not only what you have but what the enemy thinks you have.”
2. “Never go outside the experience of your people.”
3. “Wherever possible go outside of the experience of the enemy.”
4. “Make the enemy live up to their own book of rules.”
5. “Ridicule is man’s most potent weapon.”
6. “A good tactic is one that your people enjoy.”
7. “A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.”
8. “Keep the pressure on.”
9. “The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.”
10. “Major premise for tactics is development of operations that will maintain constant pressure upon the opposition.”
11. “If you push a negative hard and deep enough it will break through into its counterside.”
12. “The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.”
13. “Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it and polarize it.”

Source: www.nea.org

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