CPES Spring 2026 Lecture Series: Liberty at 250
The Contribution of Christian Ideas and Culture to Economic and Political Life
What is Freedom? What does it take to be Free?

The Center for Person, Economy, and Society's (CPES) unique mission is to explore how assumptions about existence and the human person—particularly the capacity for rational thought and free, intentional action—affect thinking in economics, business, and society, and from there influence policies and cultural trends. This highlights the relevance of Christian commitment to people as free, rational, creative beings for academic engagement, cultural movements, and policies. It also explores how Christian commonality about the person offers means of bridging ideological and political divisions. Spring 2026 features three main speakers offering different insights around these themes, a fitting exploration of liberty, and the human person, for the 250th anniversary of the United States and of the *Wealth of Nations.*

February 9: Nick Frietas. Host of *Making the Argument*; Republican Delegate in Virginia
The Christian Contribution to Liberty, and the Dangers When Christians Forget
(Co-Sponsored with Mount St. Mary's Young Americans for Freedom)
Monday, February 9; 6-7pm; Laughlin Auditorium

Liberty doesn't just happen. Liberty arose in the West from the combination of unique conditions of Europe, Greco Roman experiments and thinking, and the influence of Christianity both institutionally and in ideas. That history demonstrates how freedom requires a host of ideas and institutions to defend and rationalize it. That defense never stops.

In this lecture, Nicholas Frietas of Young America's Foundation explores the Christian contribution to freedom and the dangers when that defense wanes. This is a celebration of Christianity's role, but also a recognition that the hard work didn't end centuries ago, and a call to Christians to bear the responsibility for that freedom, lest they risk losing it. Moreover, that defense is not solely in politics, but especially in the world of ideas and culture more generally.

Nick Frietas served as a Republican delegate in the Virginia legislature. Prior to that, he served two tours in Iraq as a member of the US Special Forces (Green Berets). He currently hosts such programs as *Making the Argument* and *The Why Minutes*, with over 5 million followers, averaging over 2 million per day. He is a devout Christian, married, and father of three children.

This event is primarily sponsored by the Mount St. Mary's chapter of the Young Americans for Freedom and generously enabled by the Young America's Foundation. We thank them for partnering with CPES in making this event possible.

This event is intended to foster thoughtful discussion across perspectives. Views expressed are those of the speaker and do not necessarily reflect those of Mount St. Mary's University.

February 25: Stephanie Slade: Senior Editor, *Reason* Magazine
Fusionism: Liberty, Virtue, and the Future of the American Right
Why the Christian View of the Free, Rational Person is Foundational to Conservative and Libertarian Thought:

Wednesday February 25, 6-7pm. Laughlin Auditorium
Liberty is central to American history, politics, and culture. One type of liberty is freedom from external limits. This is embedded in our institutions and rights. But far deeper is *internal freedom*, i.e. the capacity for free will, free action in the first place. External liberty, while necessary, only makes sense in a non-shallow way if we are ultimately free, rational beings. While many political movements and ideologies appeal to external liberty, Christianity more explicitly begins with the need for that internal liberty first.
In this lecture, Slade explores how political movements and ideologies often gloss over this foundational need to rationalize their principles. Who will defend liberty at that deepest level? On the other hand, Christians—who provided the ideas in the first place and should be best positioned for their promotion and defense—are often unaware of the role they need to serve in that contribution to liberty. She ends with a call for Christians to take up that critical role.
Stephanie Slade is senior editor at *Reason Magazine* and a fellow at the Reason foundation, one of the nation's libertarian think tanks. Her most recent book, *Fusionism: Liberty, Virtue, and the Future of the American Right,* explores the essential role of Christian thought in the liberty and prosperity movement today (i.e. across conservatives and libertarians).

March 19. Daniel Lipinski. Democrat Congressman from Illinois.
How Christian Commitment to the Human Person Can Help Bridge Political, Ideological Divisions
Thursday, March 19, 6-7pm. Laughlin Auditorium.

While division is not new in the US, the degree to which partisanship divides politics and the culture is almost unparalleled today. This even divides our churches and Christian engagement with society.
In this lecture, Dan Lipinski – long-serving Democratic congressman from Illinois – explores why Catholics and others committed to the Church's understanding of human anthropology and flourishing are uniquely capable of overcoming America's divide. Lipinski explains, with examples from his political career, how a primary identity as a child of God, a belief in the inherent dignity of every person, and a well-formed understanding the common good and social justice uniquely enable the rejection of sectarian partisanship which is undermining the American republic.
Dan Lipinski served in Congress from 2005 to 2021 representing the 3rd District of Illinois. He currently is the Pope Leo XIII Fellow on Social Thought at the University of Dallas and a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution where his work is dedicated to bridging political divisions and revitalizing Congress.

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