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Hillsdale College's Blake Center for Faith and Freedom Hosts Christmas Lecture

Titus Techera, Hillsdale College distinguished fellow in American culture, spoke on 'Christmas With Capra.'

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College's Blake Center for Faith and Freedom in Somers, Connecticut, hosted Titus Techera, Hillsdale College distinguished fellow in American culture, on Dec. 11 and 12 for a lecture titled "Christmas With Capra." Techera discussed Frank Capra's 1946 film "It's a Wonderful Life" and its enduring lessons for America. The event also featured music performed by Hillsdale's Joy String Quartet.

"Part of our mission at the Blake Center is to foster a greater appreciation of the things that unite us as Americans, especially our heritage of faith and freedom," said Alan Crippen, executive director and chaplain of the Blake Center. "Frank Capra's films did this in a beautiful way that still resonates with viewers, and it was an honor to host Titus Techera for this lecture."

Capra came to America as a child in poverty, worked his way through school, and eventually became a film director in the 1930s and '40s, portraying America through the eyes of a stranger who had fallen in love with it.

"The movies especially brought America together throughout the 20th century. The feeling that we all share the same tears, the same laughter, together at the same time, and the trust that it's happening coast to coast, brought people together," Techera said. "And nobody did that quite as well as Frank Capra, who took it as his job, so to speak, to see America through the '30s, which were a very crazy time."

According to Techera, Capra feared after World War II that success would ruin people by blinding them to their weaknesses and causing them to forget their past.

“He persuaded people that we have to be strong enough to confront our deepest troubles, that we have to be able to look at ourselves and see, for all the work, for all of the things we do, what if uncertainty could come and break us?” Techera said. “He thought that it’s that kind of trouble — that kind of dedication and work and sustained effort that nevertheless fails — that could break confidence, that could scare an entire nation, as he had seen in the ’30s and he feared might come again, as people forget the experiences of the past. And so he embodied that in this character, George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart.”

Techera said Capra used Bailey as a model of the kind of selfless and courageous leaders America needs — and as a warning to the audience against taking such leaders for granted.

“Ask yourselves, how many people like that are there around? How many George Baileys do we have, whether it’s in Connecticut or in America as a whole?” Techera asked. “I respectfully suggest that things are actually very bad, and people hate what’s going on, and they don’t know what to do about it. They would like to have somebody like that to turn to, and it’s very hard. It’s not just a movie. It’s not just a nice story. If you watch it again, you’ll see. It’ll make you cry. But it’s also supposed to show you why that is so, what it is that we truly need.”

Titus Techera is a distinguished fellow in American culture at Hillsdale College. He is also a managing editor of the European Journal of Political Philosophy and the international program coordinator of the Edmund Burke Foundation. He has held fellowship positions at the Civitas Institute, the Claremont Institute, and the Matthias Corvinus Collegium, and his essays featuring conservative cultural and film criticism have appeared in National Review, the Federalist, the University Bookman, Modern Age, Law and Liberty, and the American Conservative. He studied the liberal arts at Bard College Berlin in Germany and political science at the University of Bucharest in Romania and the Universite Libre de Brussels in Belgium.

For photos from the event, click [here](#). For photos of the Blake Center, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About the Blake Center for Faith and Freedom

Philanthropists Prestley and Helen Blake donated the buildings and acreage of their estate in Somers, Connecticut, to Hillsdale College in 2019. The Blake Center for Faith and Freedom is a religious institution that includes an exterior replica of Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s renowned neo-classical home in Virginia. The College utilizes the property to host events that further its mission, focusing on the foundational principles of faith and freedom. To this end, most events held at the Blake Center have clear religious themes, focusing on topics relating to Christianity, man’s relationship to God, and faith generally.

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its

classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, Imprimis, with a circulation of more than 7.2 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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