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ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

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Out of the Valley
JOHN J. FLYNN III



Antigua
CARLOS X. COLORADO



7 Questions
JULIE PALAFOX



CALENDAR

Sunday, February 21, 8-11 a.m.

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What do you listen to while you commute or while driving around town? Many STMS lawyers and judges have discovered the great Catholic radio programming available in our area.

Immaculate Heart Radio (AM 1000) is available throughout San Diego and most of Orange County. Immaculate Heart Radio broadcasts an incredible array of programming, including Tim Staples, Marc Shea, the whole array of EWTN resources.

“I look forward to listening to Sister Ann Shields every morning on my iPhone. It’s like daily spiritual direction,” said STMS member Greg Weiler.

Check it out.

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The St. Thomas More Society of Orange County is an independent organization sponsored by lawyers and judges who are practicing members of the Roman Catholic Church.

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IDEALS OF ST. THOMAS MORE

The legal profession is a high calling with corresponding responsibilities to society. The principal objective of every lawyer is to promote and seek justice. Catholic Lawyers pursue the truth in both their spiritual and professional lives. The duty of a Catholic lawyer is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, His Church and its teachings at all times despite the personal consequences.

THE OBJECTIVES OF STMS

- encouraging its members to live a Christian life and apply the principles and ideals exemplified by St. Thomas More in their lives and encourage same in the legal profession.
- promoting and foster high ethical principals in the legal profession generally and, in particular, in the community of Catholic lawyers.
- assisting in the spiritual growth of its members.
- encouraging interfaith understanding and brotherhood.
- sponsoring the annual Red Mass for elected and appointed officials and members of the legal profession.

MEMBERSHIP IN STMS

Each member of the Society is committed to:

- strive to live an exemplary Christian life and apply the principles and ideals exemplified by St. Thomas More in their daily lives and encourage same in the legal profession.
- attend monthly meeting of the Society and provide personal support to the St. Thomas More Society.
- attend and support the Red Mass.

LAWYER'S PRAYER

Give me the grace, Good Lord,
to set the world at naught;
to set my mind fast upon thee
and not to hang upon the blast of men's
mouths;
to be content to be solitary;
not to long for worldly company
but utterly to cast off the world
and rid my mind of the business
thereof.

- ST. THOMAS MORE

EDITOR@STTHOMASMORE.NET

OUT OF THE VALLEY

JOHN J. FLYNN III



OUR tendency as Christians (perhaps due to a human tendency) is to deflect the appalling violence described in the Old Testament, rather than reflect on the very deep mystery it represents. The relationship between the Old and the New, we are told by Jesus himself, is one of continuity and fulfillment, rather than one of rupture. Yet the Old Testament must be faced and wrestled, as Jacob wrestled with the Angel of God. It speaks, posing a riddle it seems, and we cannot fail to answer.

One might answer that the Old Testament violence is the vocabulary spoken by the people of those times. No one who wishes to convert a people can fail to speak their language. Only by that means can their eyes be opened to truth, or, more precisely, to the One who is himself truth.

But is the violence depicted in the Old Testament no more than the vocabulary of its time? The horrors depicted reveal the horrors of sin, of its deadly grip, and the profoundly darkened vision that burdened all of humanity in those days, still utterly dedicated to a rule of its own making. Is it a cruel God who allowed such grotesque barbarity? That God is love was as true then as it is now. And he is only love, and loves his creatures foolishly and even madly, and wills for his creation only good. Yet where in the Old Testament is

there the slightest evidence of this? On every page, if only we look with open eyes: Humanity, by its sin, had forged a path into the Valley of Death. And the only route of egress was the route by which we had entered, the route of our own choosing, our own making. But only on this very path would we face the visible, physical, and truly infernal effects of the sin that created the path in the first place, reaping the fruit of the seed we'd sown. And though all this suffering was necessary, it was not sufficient. It would finally be necessary for God himself to step into this history of appalling violence and injustice, because by that means alone could he lead us from the grave.

Had there been any other path, then God who is love would have led us by that route. But it was God who made of this path--the path of our choosing--the path of our salvation, and it was God who took our place at Calvary. Was it then a cruel God who allowed the atrocities of the Old Testament? The very idea is absurd. A cruel God would have left us utterly alone, to die in our sin. But the God of mercy led us out of the Valley of Death, suffering with us and for us, and finally answering the great riddle of the Old Testament. ♦



CARLOS X. COLORADO

IF Holy Week could become manifest as a physical location in the Americas, its name would be Antigua, Guatemala. Every year, Antigua hosts intense and elaborate Holy Week celebrations following traditions from centuries past, drawing on Spanish customs as well as native Mayan fervor and flair. The entire city takes part in the events, and thousands of national and international visitors descend upon the magnificent city, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site for retaining its authentic historic identity. Located in the central highlands of Guatemala, Antigua retains well-

preserved Spanish Baroque-influenced architecture and colonial churches. This is the setting for the most vivid Holy Week experience in the Americas.

With my wife and three year-old daughter in tow, we went last year for a run-up to Easter that is simply without equal. We marveled at centuries-old churches and convents, followed the Way of the Cross permanently stamped on the city streets, and made day-trips to the surrounding countryside. My pilgrimage to Antigua left me with three distinct impressions, all related to what it means to be Catholic in the Americas: the need

to consecrate the space of a new land; the wisdom of recovering the “holy city” in the collective imagination; and an approach to a more sensible balance between the sacred and the profane in our secular world.

Antigua Guatemala means “Old (or ‘Ancient’) Guatemala” and served as the country’s third capital until an earthquake forced the capital to be moved to its current location Guatemala City. During the 17th century, enterprising church initiatives developed the city: the Jesuits founded

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elite schools and churches; the Brothers Hospitallers of St. John built hospitals; the church set up a major university. Zealous Christian missionaries worked feverishly to win souls for heaven, including an indentured servant from the Canary Islands named Pedro de San José de Betancur, known locally as *Hermano Pedro* (“Brother Peter”). He is Central America’s first saint.

Accordingly, Antigua became a spiritual capital in the New World, a city that Central American Catholics would hold up as their “New Jerusalem.” Guatemalans stamped Antigua with the characteristics of Jerusalem, including its own *Via Dolorosa*—a street called *Calle de los Pasos* (literally, “Street of the Steps,” tracing the steps of Jesus in the Via Crucis, with the Stations of the Cross marked by small shrines along the street).

Blessed Oscar Romero of El Salvador once preached that, in a Via Crucis procession, Jesus asks us to “watch as I pass by as the silent lamb bearing my cross aloft, to die at Calvary; and be assured there is no resentment in my heart: From the depth of my soul I cry out, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’” (Holy Thursday 1978 Homily.) As a child growing up in El Salvador, I witnessed first-hand the dramatic effect such processions have over an urban landscape, transforming the settings of believers’ lives into the stage for the work of redemption. ‘Here comes Jesus, down *my street*, shedding His blood where I romp and play, or where I work, or shop and otherwise do my



everyday living.’ By following Jesus across town, the enormity of His sacrifice sets in, as do the implications for the sinful city, and for a society in dire need of conversion.

Experiencing the grandeur and spectacle of Holy Week in Antigua is unforgettable. Words can hardly do it justice. Several churches churn out processions every day during Holy Week and other times during Lent. Thousands of participants take part in the largest processions, including hundreds of purple-robed men called *cucuruchos*, who carry large floats bearing the images of Christ carrying the Cross, his grieving Mother, and angels and apostles.

The *cucuruchos* belong to special brotherhoods called *cofradías*. Some *cofradías* create elaborate carpets made from sawdust and flowers on which the processions will pass. These carpets are immediately destroyed during the passing. The family that owned a small store near our hotel made many such carpets, sometimes several in a single day, because the processions crisscross the city, overlapping on each other’s



routes (also requiring a complicated coordination of street closures throughout this period).

Some *cofradías* organize large brass marching bands that play heavy, somber dirges to accompany the processions on their labyrinthine routes. Some processions last upwards of eight hours.

We stumbled upon our first procession as it poured out of the San Francisco church (where *Hermano Pedro* is buried). The *cucuruchos* maneuvered the enormous wooden float, borne on their shoulders and weighing nearly two tons, through the needle that is the small iron gate of the church. Then, the elongated, galleon-like structure protruded into the street, preceded by two columns of purple-robed and hooded *cucuruchos* at least

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two blocks long, and followed by a train of marchers of similar length. At the head of the procession, young boys in choir dress wafted the air with a thick, aromatic cloud of incense.

We saw the procession leave the San Francisco church at 1:30 p.m., and it was 7:30 p.m. when we ran into the same procession again in the town center. Dining at a popular restaurant, we heard the loud brass band sounding its mournful blasts, with the sounds of crashing cymbals punctuating the muted tones. Then, something amazing happened. The restaurant became flooded with incense. At first, it was just a mist that poured in from the edges of the half closed doors and window panes. Then, it seeped in from every crevice. We ran upstairs to watch the procession from a balcony and get out of the cloud of incense. Surprisingly, no one complained about the discomfort, noise, or blatant religiosity of the experience.

This led me to ponder the equilibrium between secular and religious life in Antigua. The city, like the rest of Guatemala, is only 50% Catholic. A cynical reading of the accommodation made for religious expression is that the secular authorities are fond of the tourist dollars. Yet, there are signs everywhere that tolerance runs deeper. For one thing, it is not simply a matter of *accommodation*—the government allowing religious expression to go on. This is true *collaboration*, of the type that would not be allowed in the U.S. Each procession is followed by a city crew called a “*tren de aseó*” (“sanitation

train”), which cleans up the trampled flower carpets and other refuse that a procession of 3,000 official participants and a larger number of faithful leave behind. These city employees work overnight, as some processions stay out late and into the morning.

City workers lift electric cables to enable tall floats to pass, and others push a portable electric generator to provide light for the marching band to read their sheet music at night. In fact, there is an official policy not to have overhead electrical wires in the city, in part to accommodate the Holy Week floats—and to preserve the city’s colonial identity and historic semblance. The city has cobblestone streets for similar reasons. The coalescence of secular and religious motives around these policies is an example of how religion and pluralistic democratic secularism can coexist, and everyone wins. The city gets enhanced revenues. But it also fosters historic preservation, secures religious freedom, and creates a society where religious values and morality nourish the public discourse and permeate the cultural milieu.

From Antigua, we also made daytrips to Chichicastenango, a town known for its Mayan culture, and the equilibrium struck between native spirituality and Catholicism. The population there is 98.5% Mayan, and 92% of the inhabitants speaks the K’iche’ language. At the 400-year old church of Santo Tomás, built on the site of a pre-Hispanic Mayan temple, K’iche’ Mayan priests still use the church for their rituals, burning incense and candles. My daughter and I lit candles at the Catholic altar, after weaving through colorfully dressed vendors in the town’s

market—said to be the largest outdoor market in Latin America.

We also journeyed to beautiful Lake Atitlán and explored the various villages along its shores, including Santiago Atitlán, the site of violent political reprisals during the country’s civil war. We venerated the relics of Fr. Stanley Rother, an American missionary assassinated in 1981 and recognized as a martyr by the Church. Finally, we made daytrips to the surrounding towns for an appreciation of the history and natural beauty of the region.

In Antigua itself, there are countless sites of religious significance, including the Tomb of Hermano Pedro; a tree he planted hundreds of years ago which is still flowering (the faithful collect its tiny white buds); Cerro de la Cruz, site of a large cross on a hill overlooking the city with spectacular views of the town; and the Posada Belén, site of a historic bishops’ retreat in 1972, that was led by Argentine Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, a mentor of Pope Francis whose beatification is now in process.

For its unique mix of religion, history and beauty—both natural and cultural—Antigua Guatemala is a city every American Catholic should visit, especially during Holy Week. ♦





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Micah 6:8

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1. How did you come to the Legal profession?

I grew up in a family of medicine men and women. My grandfather, father and brothers were doctors, my mother and godmother were nurses, my uncles were pharmacists. Even my husband is in the business of selling pharmaceuticals. Bottom line -- I didn't like blood. Law was an acceptable second choice and I grew to love and appreciate her. Like the Church, law has depth and mystery.

2. Who had the most profound impact on the development of your Christian faith?

I am a veteran of Catholic education: Catholic elementary school, all girls Catholic high school and I was even in one of the first classes of women at the University of Notre Dame. That was my foundation, but it wasn't enough to shape my faith. Once life threw me a few curveballs (an unexpected divorce, a parent's sudden death and loss of employment within one year) my Catholic faith suddenly grew in importance as it was the only constant in my life and became my cornerstone to rebuild.

3. What is your favorite book?

Every book I read is my favorite book, but one I read every Lent is *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen. Every time I read it I find myself as the Father, or as the son who stayed home or as the wandering prodigal son. It amazes me how our lives continually

7 QUESTIONS

with

Judge
Julie
Palafox



intersect and we interweave these roles only to discover God's love and mercy is what saves us from ourselves.

4. Who is your favorite saint?

There are lots to choose, but I started wearing a Miraculous Medal every day and suddenly the Mother of God is guiding me. Next question.

5. Do you have a favorite verse or story from scripture?

"Be still" Psalm 46:10.

I must have said this a million times to my siblings, my friends, my kids, my husband, my clients and now I'm saying it to the litigants who come in my courtroom.

6. What do you appreciate most about the faith?

The richness and depth of our Catholic faith. The tapestry of sacraments and rituals and prayers. The universal Church and the supernatural and unexplained mysteries. Last week I walked through a designated "Holy Door of Mercy". In what other church can you do that?

7. What advice can you give to a young lawyer on living the Catholic faith in the legal profession?

During your journey, expect periods of darkness or confusion. Be still. Take consolation. Jesus grew angry and anxious, the saints were imperfect and sinned, and Peter, the rock of our Church, doubted and betrayed. Let ordinary life be enough for you. Be a good lawyer, but be your better self along the way. As Saint Timothy said: fight the good fight, finish the race and keep your faith.