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ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

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Ash Wednesday Joy
GREG WEILER



The Opportune
Time
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7 Questions
FABIO R. CABEZAS



March
Speaker
PIA D. SOLENNI



ASH WEDNESDAY JOY

**REFLECTIONS ON EVERYTHING
(ANYTHING LESS THAN
EVERYTHING IS NOT ENOUGH)**

GREGORY N. WEILER



Another year's Ash Wednesday with it's "repent and believe in the Gospel." And another year's enthusiastic beginning of Lent for the early morning weekday Mass crowd.

At the office, it seems that the same people make the same comments every year: "You have something on your forehead. Oh yeah—that Lent thing." I take my ashes and their comments with what feels like a combination of courage and sinful pride: "I'm proud to be Catholic. Why aren't you smart enough to be?" (They very well might be if I modeled Christ better, ugh.)

All day long the ashes were my badge of faith in an unfriendly world, a world that seems oblivious to what is fundamental to us. We are eternal creatures. We will spend eternity in only one of two places—and we get to choose. But Holy Mother Church starts us off in the Lenten season with the reminder of the life we left behind at baptism, the life without meaning or destiny, the life urged on us by the world, the life which I fear leads so many to despair.

Ashes are that stark reminder of our substance without God, without Christ, without Easter.

I think it's that rather somber ashen reminder which is the cause of our Ash Wednesday joy, for alas, we know through faith, even as we pray that first Lenten Mass without the Aleluia that we need not drink the Cool Aid and live without God, without Christ, without Easter. We know Easter is about to cascade down on us like the heavenly waterfall that Our Savior's grace-filled redemption is.

So we lovingly embrace this liturgical season as our helper in grasping tightly, with both fists, the present reality that the Kingdom of God is here *now*. Our Savior is with us *now*.

Let us pray deeply this Lent on how we got here, from dust to heirs to the Kingdom, a long way, from Good Friday to Easter morning. A passage to that eternal destiny which is our deepest longing, whose fare was our dear Lord's Passion and death.

I just can't help but smile .

A blessed Lent. PAX ~ GNW

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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:

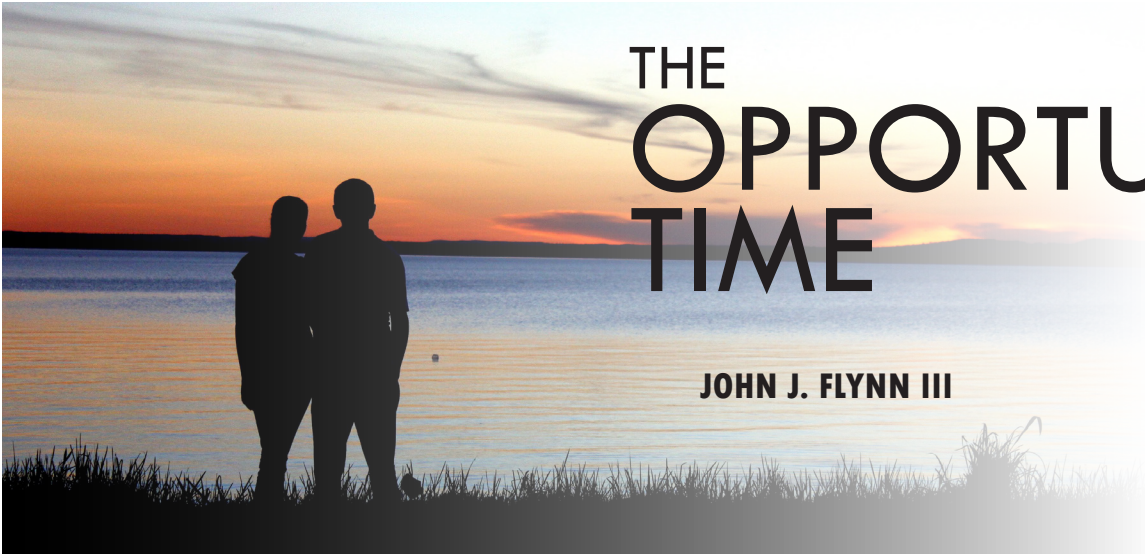
- strive to live an exemplary Christian life and apply the principles and ideals exemplified by St. Thomas More in their daily lives and encourage same in the legal profession.
- attend monthly meeting of the Society and provide personal support to the St. Thomas More Society.
- attend and support the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



THE OPPORTUNE TIME

JOHN J. FLYNN III

When someone we love dies, a great stupefying pall descends, of incomprehension and silence. Words then are ridiculous, so nothing is said. We only stare at death and death stares back, for days, for weeks, until one of us speaks. It is nearly always death that speaks first, and to our enlightenment.

A few days after my mother, Marie, died in 2013, nearly 22 years after the death of my father, John, I was drawn, without full awareness of it, into a deep state of reflection, in which it seemed to me there was no thought at all, just a kind of watching and listening. I saw then in my mind's eye, as one watches as a witness, my mother on her death bed, peacefully awaiting her own death. I was standing in this image at her bedside, yet I seemed to be watching both my mother and myself from a considerable distance. The room resembled her hospital room, but only a little. The ceiling was very high, so high that it could have had no earthly builder. I understood that this room, occupied at that moment only by mother and myself, was the room of the life, all of it, that my mother had given to me. At the moment of her death, as the images unfolded, and to my great surprise, the room that seemed to have no ceiling was filled suddenly with beautiful gift-wrapped presents. I understood at that moment that these represented all the gifts that my mother had given me in life, but that I had not seen with adequate clarity while she was still alive. Even now I do not know whether it was human nature or just my own that had made me see so poorly.

My mom and dad were born in the early 1920s, my mom in San Bernardino, and my dad in Cincinnati. Neither was poor, exactly, but they grew up in the Great Depression, and neither family was by any standard affluent, or even middle class. Both were descended from Irish immigrants. My dad was a Marine in World War II, attached as a navigator to the busiest transport squadron in the Iwo Jima Operation. My mom, if memory serves correctly, worked as a secretary during the war at the San Bernardino Army Air Base, later known as Norton Air Force Base. After the war, my mom and dad met in the Los Angeles office of the FBI, where my dad was a Special Agent. They married in 1950, and stayed married until my dad's death in 1991. To use Thurber's phrase, their union was three times blessed with issue, three boys, myself included. I never heard any words of anger between them but once, and they never called each other by name, only by terms of endearment. But there were sorrows as well as joys in their marriage, and neither the joys nor the sorrows can be counted.

My mom missed my dad for 22 years, stoically most of the time, but not always. As she drew close to death, she seemed unconsciously to defy the predicted hour of death, waiting for one that was perhaps appointed. As the first day of waiting drew to a close, I considered the significance of the date, and wondered to myself whether she was clinging to life for just one more day. So in fact she did, finally re-joining the love of her life, my dad, at the opportune time, on Valentine's Day, 2013. ♦

AN ISSUE OF FAITH: PRAYER

PATRICK E. WHALEN



Faith in God is a gracious gift of the Holy Spirit to each of us believers. A natural result of faith is the desire to explore our personal relationship with God by way of prayer. Yet I surmise from my own experience of prayer and from a review of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the subject, it is very difficult to define prayer in its entire array. Even our Catholic Catechism discusses it from sections 2558 to at least 2758 on over 48 pages!

A basic Jesuit definition of prayer is “becoming conscious of God who is always conscious of us.” But of course prayer is much more than just the initial focus of mind and feelings upon God. There are classical approaches to prayer to consider before offering some concluding comments on those who pray “for a living”!

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola

“The Exercises are a school of prayer. The two primary forms of praying taught in the Exercises are meditation

and contemplation.

“In meditation, we use our intellect to wrestle with basic principles that guide our life. Reading Scripture, we pray over words, images, and ideas. We engage our memory to appreciate the activity of God in our life. Such insights into who God is and who we are before God allow our hearts to be moved.

“Contemplation is more about feeling than thinking. Contemplation often stirs the emotions and inspires deep, God- given desires. In contemplation, we rely on our imaginations to place ourselves in a setting from the Gospels or in a scene proposed by Ignatius.” (Kevin O’Brien, SJ- Vice President for Mission and Ministry at Georgetown University)

The Norbertine Canonesses of Tehachapi

Even as we struggle with the advancement of our own prayer life, there are those who warrant our attention, admiration and even financial support. Consider for example, the

Norbertine Canonesses of Tehachapi, California.

The Canonesses of the Norbertine Order are Roman Catholic cloistered nuns, and their lives are devoted to saying liturgical prayer, to celebrating the Sacred Liturgy and to interceding for the needs of the Church and the world- especially their founding fathers of St. Michael’s Abbey in the complementary role as spiritual daughters of the Abbey. In fact, the Sisters daily perform the full cycle of the divine office, sung seven times a day and night in community both in Latin and English. They also have an e-mail prayer request line, receiving many prayer requests daily which are shared with all the Sisters for prayer: pray_req@cybersurfers.net

They were the subject of a Bakersfield, California television news broadcast. Excerpts of that broadcast are as follows:

“Nestled in the mountains just outside Tehachapi, there is a community of

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

AN ISSUE OF FAITH: PRAYER

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

cloistered Catholic nuns, doing the Lord's work in seclusion, separated from the outside world. They represent the first community of Norbertine canonesses in the United States.

"They've made that decision to enter the cloister, convinced in their heart that the greatest thing I can do, for people in the world, is to pray for them," said Sister Mary John Paul.

At first in 1997, they were just five sisters (from Santa Ana, California). Today they number 32, with more waiting to come. Many of the sisters are young, 18 or 19 years old. They come from four different continents and all across the U.S., bringing with them graduate degrees and professional experience from all walks of life—lawyers, engineers, linguists. Their former lives are now abandoned for a hidden life of silence, solitude and prayer.

After 10 years of hard work and navigating through a maze of government regulations, the "sisters of the mountain" received the green light to build their new monastery. "It is the providence of God," said Mother Superior Mary Augustine. Here they will spend the rest of their lives, secluded from the rest of the world, yet still intimately aware

of global developments that may warrant their prayerful intercessions.

"I believe that God really approves of what we are doing and he is pleased with our efforts because he has come through for us many different times, when we had deadlines for funds and things. It's been a strong proof for me that God approves of our vocation," said Sister Mary Agnes.

The Norbertine Sisters believe their new monastery is a gift from God. Their goal toward self-sufficiency had meager beginnings: a couple of milk cows, a few goats and some chickens. Now they are close to commercial production and sales of cheeses from their stainless steel commercial dairy.

"It's certainly not our work or my work. That property had been for sale for 20 years and nobody bought it. I think it's the providence of God. He wanted us to be established on this mountain. I don't know why, but obviously he wanted us here," said Mother Superior. (*KGET Channel 17, Bakersfield, California*)

It is good to know that in our darkest hours, there are holy sisters in Christ praying for us—not just to make a difference in our lives, but to give all the glory to God. ♦

TUNE IN FOR A TUNE UP

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 current STMS President Greg Weiler.

Check it out.



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7 QUESTIONS

1. How did you come to the Legal profession?

Staying close to my immediate family in Southern California was one reason I chose the legal profession.

Another reason was my fascination with the number of things lawyers did. It seemed like a profession which drew on many academic disciplines, which could result in many types of work options. With that in mind, I attended Law School at the University of Southern California.

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

It is a tie between two women, my late mother and my wife Rita. My late mother was a divorced and remarried Catholic, who never lost her faith, hope, and love for our Lord and in the Church. I cannot help but draw inspiration. Celebrating the sacrament of marriage with Rita has caused us to grow in love for each and closer to our Lord and the Church.

3. What is your favorite book?

The 1907 novel *Lord of the World*, written by Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson. It is a very Catholic book that centers upon the rise of the Anti-Christ and the end of the world.

Monsignor Benson predicted well how "moral relativism" would lead to the "culture of death."

4. Who is your favorite saint?

While she is not a canonized saint just yet, the answer is Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, MC. Everyone knows about Mother Teresa, and her work the with poor. She responded to God's call without reservation. Her love for our Lord had no limits, and she then expressed that love towards humanity in a way in which she wanted the very best for every life she touched.

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

The verse(s) consisting of the parable of the Prodigal Son. This parable has so much to offer. It speaks to us on many levels. Like the young son, I am a sinner humbly in need of our Lord's forgiveness, love, and mercy. At times, I am also like the Father and from the Father, I need the grace to better forgive and to love others. At times, I am like the older brother who takes for granted the love of the Father.

6. What do you appreciate most about the faith?

The Christian Faith is a prescription for happiness and heaven. Scripture and the sacraments found together in the barque of St. Peter instills faith, hope, and love for the journey.

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

Develop a prayer life.

Go to Mass frequently.

Educate yourself thoroughly in the Catholic faith.

Finally, do not be afraid to share your Catholic faith with others. ♦



with
Fabio R. Cabezas

Senior Associate
Burke, Williams &
Sorenson, LLP

MARCH MEETING SPEAKER

DR. PIA DE SOLENNI

Dr. Pia de Solenni is a theologian, ethicist, and cultural analyst. She serves as the Associate Dean of the Augustine Institute – Orange County, located at Christ Cathedral. She is an expert in issues relating to women’s health, life issues, the new feminism, Catholicism, and culture. Her work has appeared in various publications including The Wall Street Journal Europe, The Washington Post, National Catholic Reporter, Our Sunday Visitor, and National Review Online.



Dr. de Solenni has participated in many radio and television talk shows on various topics. She has appeared on MSNBC, “Hardball with Chris Matthews”, “The O’Reilly Factor”, CNN, ABCNews, among others. Dr. de Solenni has been quoted in newspapers nationwide, including The New York Times, The Washington Times, and The Associated Press.

Dr. de Solenni received her doctorate in sacred theology *summa cum laude* from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome. Her dissertation was published in the university series *Dissertationes*. On November 8, 2001, she received the 2001 Award of the Pontifical Academies for her doctoral work. The award was presented by John Paul II.

In addition to the doctorate, Dr. de Solenni holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Arts-Great Books from Thomas Aquinas College, California; a Sacred Theology Baccalaureate from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), Rome; and a Sacred Theology Licentiate from Holy Cross, Rome.

Dr. de Solenni resides in Orange County, California.

CALENDAR

Wednesday, March 18, 12:30 p.m.

Monthly lunch meeting with speaker Dr. Pia de Solenni.

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Sunday, March 22, 8-11 a.m.

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