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ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

FEBRUARY 2014

VOLUME 19 ISSUE 1

Be Not
Afraid
GREGORY WEILER



The Church
in Bloom
JOHN J. FLYNN III



Still Catholic
MICHAEL GARVEY



**STMS JUDGES
AND LAWYERS
AT ISAIAH HOUSE**

BE NOT AFRAID (OF GOING ON RETREAT)

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN GREGORY N. WEILER



This month mark's the 20th anniversary of my wife and I attending a Cursillo Retreat, known to me as "A Short Course In Christianity." As it is for so many, my Cursillo weekend was a spiritual earthquake. At the age of 37, through the singular grace of that retreat, this cradle Catholic had a true conversion, a true encounter with the living God.

The three questions on my e-mail tag line ("Where did I come from?" and "Why am I here?" and "Where am I going?") crystalized before my eyes, and the answers were manifest. (My ealier answers to those questions were, "Who cares," and "To satisfy all my worldly wants," and "Don't bother me now I'm busy self indulging, I'll worry about that later.")

The pettiness of those things that had before dominated my thinking (and therefore my life) were put into perspective.

We are eternal creatures with an eternal destiny in only one of two places. Our Dear Lord gave us both the awesome choice of destinies and the means to make the right choice.

Do you ever wonder what drives folks like me and all the STMS folks to bug you, sponsor the Red Mass, urge you to Isaiah House, urge you to live a sacramental life and Eucharistic Life? You might wonder, don't these people have a life?

For all of us in the St Thomas More Society, what drives us and compels us to reach out to you, the legal community, is that urgency felt when one realizes we are truly brothers and sisters, that life is short and eternity weighs in the balance of how we live our lives (Tempus Fugit Momento Mori).

Not tomorrow, today--now. Choose a life of active love, the life proposed by Christ, a life that will lead to the fulfillment of all your desires.

Be not afraid: the mantra of Our Lord and the first exhortation of soon-to-be Saint John Paul II.

They are still words for us today. PAX ~ GNW

PS. Ask me about attending a Cursillo.

Gregory N. Weiler is a partner at Palmieri, Tyler, Wiener, Wilhelm & Waldron LLP in Irvine.

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veritatem

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

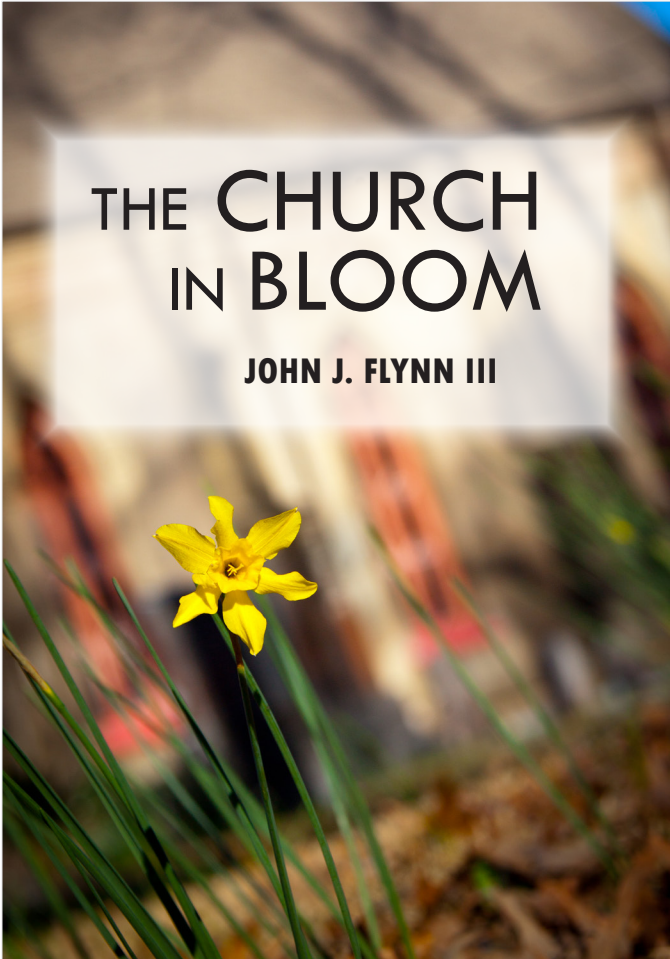
Give me the grace, Good Lord,
to set the world at naught;
to set my mind fast upon thee
and not to hang upon the blast of men's
mouths;
to be content to be solitary;
not to long for worldly company
but utterly to cast off the world
and rid my mind of the business
thereof.

• ST. THOMAS MORE

EDITOR@STTHOMASMORE.NET

THE CHURCH IN BLOOM

JOHN J. FLYNN III



Is the faith a mere system of interdictions? In a sense, of course, it is, in the same way that a channel interdicts water, or architecture interdicts iron and steel, brick and mortar, every “negation” a blow struck to the marble, revealing the *Nobilis Forma*. But, to borrow from Henri de Lubac, one of the great Catholic theologians of the 20th century, every “no” uttered by the Church is merely the other side of an affirmation: Every rule of the Church, whether expressed in positive or negative form, is grounded in the love of God for the world, the Father’s wish for the perfection of human happiness.

The relationship of specific prohibitions to the love of God can at times be difficult to discern, and, even where it can be expressed in words, the prohibitions can be experienced as a great burden, a reality that we perhaps have not as a Church sufficiently acknowledged. The love of God is the heart and soul of the faith, and it is our responsibility as Catholic Christians always to reveal, and never to conceal or in any way obscure, this eternal reality, which communicates life to every teaching, rule, doctrine and dogma, however they may be expressed.

De Lubac beautifully described this aspect of the faith:

If Christ is not her Architect, and His spirit is not the mortar which binds together the living stone of which she is built, then her building is indeed fallen into ruin. If she does not reflect the unique beauty of the face of Christ, the Church is without beauty, as she is if she is not the tree whose root is the passion of Christ. The knowledge on which she prides herself is false, and the wisdom which is her ornament is false, if both are not summed up in Christ; if her light is not “illuminated,” coming wholly from Christ, she certainly has us captive in the shadow of death. All her teaching is a lie, if she does not announce the Truth which is Christ; all her glory is vanity if she does not find in it the humility of Christ. Her very name is something foreign to us if it does not at once call to mind the one Name given to men for their salvation. If she is not the sacrament, the effective sign, of Christ, then she is nothing.¹

Love and truth are two sides of a coin, neither existing without the other. The totality of the Church’s orthodoxy perfectly marries the orthodoxy of the cross and the orthodoxy of doctrine. There is no possibility of contradiction between the two, as de Lubac himself acknowledged, since love and truth are one in God.

The papacy of Francis is one of continuity with those of his predecessors. If now the other side of the coin is revealed, if now a flower blooms that attracts the world in an entirely new way, it is only because the seed was first planted and the roots first sunk. This is a moment of continuity, not of rupture, a moment of fruition and revelation. ♦

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HUMAN HAPPINESS.**

¹ Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 220.

FEBRUARY MEETING RECAP

DR. CHRISTOPHER KACZOR, "SEVEN MYTHS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH"



Dr. Kaczor is Professor of Philosophy at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. He graduated from the Honors Program of Boston College, earned a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame., did post-doctoral work in Germany at the University of Cologne and returned as a Fulbright Scholar.

His nine books include: *The Seven Big Myths about the Catholic Church*; *The Ethics of Abortion*; *O Rare Ralph McInerney: Stories and Reflections on a Legendary Notre Dame Professor*; *Thomas Aquinas on the Cardinal Virtues*; *Thomas Aquinas on Faith, Hope, and Love*; and *How to Stay Catholic in College*.

Dr. Kaczor's research on issues of ethics, philosophy, and religion has been in *The Wall Street Journal*, the *Huffington Post*, *National Review*, *NPR*, *BBC*, *EWTN*, *ABC*, *NBC*, *FOX*, *CBS*, *MSNBC*, and *The Today Show*.

Father Hughes recommendation of the month:

C.S. LEWIS' ESSAY "THE WEIGHT OF GLORY"

Obviously C.S. Lewis is one of the most important Christian writers of the 20th Century, but his essay *The Weight of Glory* is nonetheless remarkable, even for Lewis. Just a few of the tidbits:

"Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promise of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak."

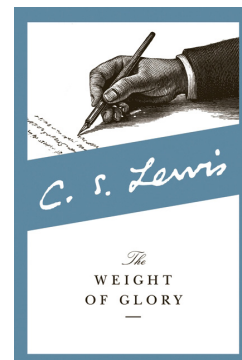
Noting our desire, our longing to put out into the deep Lewis states: "Apparently, then our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be united with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be alas summoned inside would be above glory and honor beyond our merits and also the healing of that old ache."

And on our true nature, our destiny he says:

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.... It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."

The Weight of Glory is a definite must read.

[Coming months: Lewis' *Abolition of Man* and *Mere Christianity*]



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.



CALENDAR

Wednesday, March 19, 12 p.m.

Monthly lunch meeting.
Feast of St. Joseph.

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STILL CATHOLIC

MICHAEL GARVEY

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AT NOTRE DAME UNIVERSITY, CLASS OF 1974



I should be forgiven for beginning with some reluctance. After all, for almost half a century — at least since the 1970s — a sort of subgenre of opinion journalism has flourished, consisting of essays written by beleaguered Catholics addressing the question: “Why I am still a Catholic.” All too often these essays carry a discernible and unsavory subtext that goes something like this: I know it’s a bit eccentric of me, but as unfair, unfeeling and unloving as the Catholic Church has been to me and those I love, wisdom, generosity and courage enable me to endure its numerous shortcomings as I await the day the Church can accommodate these virtues of mine.

I’ll always remember how my friend Ralph McInerny, Notre Dame’s late, great philosopher, would react to such pieces. “I wonder why they do us the favor of staying,” he’d growl.

I know what Ralph meant, but whether or not “they” are doing us a favor, I’m pleased to hear that they’re staying. Whether or not I’m doing us a favor, I’m staying, too.

As to the future of this “Why I am still a Catholic” theme, all bets seem to be off since the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI and the election of Pope Francis. It could be endangered if, as Jesuit Father Thomas Reese says, “it’s fun to be a Catholic again” (although I don’t remember when it was fun before), or when The New York Times columnist Timothy Egan, who knows

a thing or two about disenchanted Catholics, reports that “the lapsed are listening.”

Certainly for some 15 years before the latest change of popes, frequent opportunities arose to ponder the question. Catholic news seemed routinely and predominantly to concern the rape of children by priests; the evident indifference of the bishops; the bankrupting of Catholic dioceses and religious orders; the clumsy episcopal sorties in the culture wars; the suppression — real or imagined — of religious orders of women; and the swelling demographic of people raised in, but now indifferent to, the Catholic Church.

When Benedict resigned on February 28, 2013, the church hadn’t seen anything quite like it since the 13th century, when Pope Celestine V stepped down less than six months after his own election. Celestine’s successor, Pope Boniface VIII, put that shy and humble man (who in fact reminds me a little of Pope Benedict) in prison, where he died 10 months later. Pope Francis has treated his own predecessor far more graciously, but even eight centuries later it’s clear that serious Catholics take papal resignations seriously.

“Resignation: that’s what American Catholics are feeling about our faith,” wrote one such Catholic, Paul Elie, in a New York Times op/ed piece last year. “We are resigned to the fact that so much in the Roman Catholic Church

is broken and won’t be fixed anytime soon. So if the pope can resign, we can, too. We should give up Catholicism en masse, if only for a time.”

I admire Elie’s voice and work, and if he has followed his own advice and resigned from the Church, I hope and pray that it will indeed be “only for a time.”

Even so, the very phrase “resigning from the Church” sounds odd to me. It carries a whiff of the merely optional, as if belonging to the Church were a simple matter of judicious choice, like joining the Audubon Society or subscribing to The New York Times. I grew tired of birding and didn’t want to pay dues, so I quit the Audubon Society; the editorials in the Times are fatuous, and I don’t learn much that I can’t learn elsewhere from the reporting, so I have “resigned,” I suppose I could say, from its subscription list. How would I cancel my subscription to the sacraments? I never paid for it to begin with. It was a gift subscription.

And why would I cancel my subscription? Because the sacraments are dispensed — if that’s even the right word — by men (and yes, yes, it’s all men at the moment, from the pope down to the ushers) whose corporate behavior has so often seemed (and occasionally really been) misogynistic, shameful and cowardly? Men who, come to think of it, remind me

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

STILL CATHOLIC

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

each other to pray for mercy rather than what we deserve. We beg not to be judged justly. The cardinals and bishops don't deserve that gift subscription any more than I do.

Even if I wanted to, I wouldn't know quite how to go about resigning from the Church, but if my resignation could somehow be tendered and accepted, it would undoubtedly involve my absence from Mass.

I go to Mass as often as I can, and because I live and work around the campus of Notre Dame, where Mass is so frequent and omnipresent an event, that is often indeed. Because this sounds like a pietistic boast, I hasten to add that Mass here can become as much a matter of pure reflex as any other habit, good or bad. It is a habit almost as available as sin and almost as easily indulged: There is a pre-dawn morning Mass in the Crypt; there are midday and late afternoon Masses in the Basilica; there is a noon Mass in the Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel of Malloy Hall; there is an 11:30 Mass at Holy Cross House; and then there are the daily and nightly Masses in the residence halls. A whole smorgasbord of liturgical styles is proffered at these: Sometimes we sing, sometimes we mumble; sometimes we join hands at the Our Father and other times nod curtly to one another at the sign of peace. The music of our worship ranges from what angelic hosts proclaim to what you might hear in any Burger King commercial. Most of the time the homilies anaesthetize us, and occasionally they awaken us to scorch our hearts.

These idiosyncrasies — of priests, cantors, lectors, acolytes and fellow worshipers — can be distracting, amusing or annoying, but they would be impossible to register any place where Mass were less available, any place people could go hungry for the Eucharist. I suppose I am an addict of sorts, a glutton: I could never resign from the Church if that meant I could no longer go to Mass, no longer feed on the Eucharist.

That, to put it indelicately, is what the Church is: a conglomeration of Eucharist-addicts. To admit or, perhaps better, to “confess” that we remain in the Church is no more than to acknowledge our need. We are blessed because of that need, according to the Beatitudes, but we shouldn't be under any illusions about who we are and what the Church is made of. Right at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, the genealogy of Jesus Christ gives that long list of occasionally unpronounceable names to emphasize a truth put memorably

uncomfortably of . . . me. No wonder that we begin every Mass, these men and all the rest of us, by asking all the saints and

by the Dominican theologian Herbert McCabe: “God's plan is worked out not in pious people, people with religious experiences, but in a set of crude, passionate and thoroughly disreputable people. Jesus belonged to a family of murderers, cheats, cowards, adulterers and liars — he belonged to us and came to help us. No wonder he came to a bad end and gave us some hope.”

We damn well ought to be “resigned to the fact that so much in the Roman Catholic Church is broken and won't be fixed anytime soon.” To see how broken the Church is, I have to look no further than into myself. We need help and badly.

Things have been broken from the outset: Not 24 hours after sharing the first Eucharist, our first pope denied that he'd ever clapped eyes on Jesus, and our first bishops were nowhere to be found. The Church of the 12th and 13th centuries, the Church of Saint Francis of Assisi, included a papal army which, at Béziers in France, slaughtered 10,000 or more men, women and children suspected of heresy. In more recent times, the horrifyingly widespread sexual abuse of children, and the equally horrifying and widespread failure of our bishops to care for them has impoverished and disgraced us all. And now there is our current Church. Stay tuned.

I happen to love our latest pope (and, really, who doesn't?), but we were never promised loveable popes. We have plenty of saints to keep us company and give us heart, thank God, but we were never promised that the Church would be administered by them, nor even that the Church would be administered by minimally decent and reasonably competent people. We are not promised that Jesus will never again be denied, deserted and betrayed, nor are we promised that trusted teachers, priests, bishops and popes won't do the denying, deserting and betraying. We are not promised that they (and we) won't sin again and again and again, only that He will always forgive.

What we are promised is not that we possess the Truth but that He has a Church and that He will always be there, however we may deny, desert and betray Him. What we are promised is that the One who told Moses so frightfully “no one can look upon Me and live” now offers Himself to us as food. What we are promised is his presence in the Eucharist, his mercy in our sorrow, his welcome as we lie dying. What we are promised is that He loves us, and that, if we will only bring ourselves to ask, He will bless us with a ravenous hunger for intimacy with Himself. That He will save us, in other words.

I'll stay in his Church as long as I can. I can't afford to stay elsewhere. ♦

“Still Catholic” was first published in the Winter 2013/14 issue of Notre Dame Magazine.

CONTEMPLATION IN ACTION: STMS JUDGES AND LAWYERS AT ISAIAH HOUSE

It's like the famous quote: "Here comes everybody," just like in the Gospel when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. Every fourth Sunday at Isaiah House, the Catholic Worker home in Santa Ana, you might find a Federal District Court Judge flipping hamburgers, a Superior Judge washing dishes and a myriad of the legal community serving folks on the other end of the economic spectrum.

Service, love in action and grace with legs: You'll find them all in a small Christian community on Cypress Avenue in Santa Ana.

While it's only one day a month, this *Matthew 25* service is more than a just tip of the hat to the homeless in Orange County. Rather, the STMS service at Isaiah House is much more about the folks in the legal community being evangelized by the guests at Isaiah House. It is in serving the least of their brethren that the legal community learns who the legal system is meant to serve. It is there that they have the "encounter" with Christ so often mentioned by Pope Francis. It's another colorful Gospel paradox of receiving more from service than one gives.

If you want to join the fun, calendar the fourth Sunday of every month at 8:15 in the morning until 10:30 a.m. at 316 Cypress Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92701 (just bring an apron and a smile). Contact David Werner at davidw@wernerllp.com for questions or more information.

