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ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

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VOLUME 22 ISSUE 4

St. Thomas More and
Patriotism



Blessed Josef
Mayr-Nusser



The Face of
the Lord
JOHN J. FLYNN III



ONE MINUTE WITH
POPE FRANCIS



7 Questions
PATRICK LAURENCE

7





SAIN'T THOMAS More, whose feast we celebrated this month, is a continual reminder of the moral challenge facing every Catholic lawyer: what must we do to be 'first, God's faithful servants'?

"Would the lawyer who believes that abortion is morally unjust represent physicians who routinely perform abortions?"

"Can the prosecutor who believes that the death penalty violates personally held beliefs associated with terminating human life, zealously prosecute someone accused of capital murder?"

"Would an attorney whose beliefs are strongly rooted in religion and who regularly represents those whose civil liberties have been abridged accept as a client and zealously represent an atheist who challenges school prayer?"

Blake D. Morant, *Lessons From Thomas More's Dilemma of Conscience: Reconciling the Clash Between a Lawyer's Beliefs and Professional Expectations*, 78 St. John's L. Rev. 993-994 (2012).

St. Thomas represents the ultimate crisis created when a conflict arises between the lawyer's highest ideals and the pressures imposed by professional obligations.

At a minimum, St. Thomas' example reminds us that the ethical lawyer must constantly navigate the tension between these two poles. If we never experience this conflict, it should be a red flag that we may be lacking an ethical frame of reference to govern our practice so that we do not become

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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

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st. thomas more

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

ESPECIALLY, THIS SEASON

OF PATRIOTISM

SAINT THOMAS MORE'S FAMOUS WORDS,
"I die the King's good servant and God's first," remain an

• At a glance •

Born: February 7, 1478

Died: July 6, 1535 (aged 57)

Lord Chancellor of England,
October 1529 – May 1532

Chancellor of the Duchy of
Lancaster, December 1525 –
November 1529

Speaker of the House of
Commons, April 1523 – August
1523

Beatified: December 29, 1886, by
Pope Leo XIII

Canonized: May 19, 1935, by
Pope Pius XI

Feast: June 22

inspiration for all those who dedicate their lives to the service of the common good, and serve as a personal motto to every American Catholic, especially lawyers (even though St. Thomas was born in the heart of London in 1478, where he was beheaded in July 1535 after refusing to recognize the King's divorce and remarriage).

After studying at Oxford and the London Inns of Court, St. Thomas went on to become

a prominent lawyer, a Member of Parliament, and a well-respected judge. He served in numerous public capacities, but he never allowed his official duties interfere with his fatherly supervision of his children's education or with his intense life of study as a leading humanist. After agreeing to enter the King's service at forty-one, he rose quickly in his responsibilities until he became Lord Chancellor of England at the age of fifty-two. He resigned that office, however, after King Henry VIII manipulated both Parliament and the Convocation of Clergy in order to assume control over the Church in England. Saint Thomas was eventually imprisoned for fifteen months before being tried and executed for not signing an oath that recognized the King's supremacy in spiritual affairs.

The Christian steadfastness which Thomas More demonstrated in martyrdom has made his name famous down through the centuries. In his own lifetime, he was already known throughout Europe for his scholarship and his innovative views, which led him, for example, to give his daughters the same education his son received — a revolutionary development in those times. His work as a writer — especially his translations of the Greek satirist Lucian, his collection of original poems, and his great classic *Utopia* — lent his name

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IN GOOD FAITH

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by the legislature, the State Bar, local bars and professional associations, including standards of civility, provides

Machiavellian mercenaries in a moral morass.

Adhering to accepted codes of ethics, such as those promulgated

insurance against that peril.

However, that may not be enough. Catholic lawyers must beware the acute crisis that may arise when such secular codes of conduct themselves become the source of an unconscionable obligation, and to gird our resolve for that ultimate case of conscientious objection.

St. Thomas More, pray for us! ♦



ONE MINUTE WITH FRANCIS

The Pope's Prayer Intention for the month of July is for Lapsed Christians: "That our brothers and sisters who have strayed from the faith, through our prayer and witness to the Gospel, may rediscover the merciful closeness of the Lord and the beauty of the Christian life."

The Church of Emmaus

We have labored greatly and, at times, we see what appear to be failures. We feel like those who must tally up a losing season as we consider those who have left us or no longer consider us credible or relevant.

Let us read once again, in this light, the story of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-15). The two disciples have left Jerusalem. They are leaving behind the "nakedness" of God. They are scandalized by the failure of the Messiah in whom they had hoped and who now appeared utterly vanquished, humiliated, even after the third day (vv. 17-21). Here we have to face the difficult mystery of those people who leave the Church, who, under the illusion of alternative ideas, now think that the Church – their Jerusalem – can no longer offer them anything meaningful and important. So they set off on the road alone, with their

disappointment. It is a fact that nowadays there are many people like the two disciples of Emmaus; not only those looking for answers in the new religious groups that are sprouting up, but also those who already seem godless, both in theory and in practice.

From this point of view, we need a Church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey; a Church able to make sense of the "night" contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a Church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return.

(By His Holiness Pope Francis, July 28, 2013, Address to Brazilian Bishops)

BLESSED JOSEF MAYR-NUSSER

IN THE STEPS OF ST. THOMAS MORE



images via

ON SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 2017, JOSEF Mayr-Nusser was beatified in Bolzano, Italy. He is remembered as an ordinary office worker who refused to take an Oath to Hitler, inspired in part by the courageous witness of a man who lived four hundred years before him—St. Thomas More.

As a young man, Blessed Josef Mayr-Nusser became passionately interested in St. Thomas More, especially in his letters from prison, and the challenge of taking a stand based on conscience. In 1938 Josef wrote: “To give witness is our only effective weapon today.”

Mayr-Nusser was actually an Italian citizen from South Tyrol, a German-speaking enclave in northern Italy. Born in 1910, the fourth of seven children, he worked as a cashier in a company in Bolzano. He was a member of Catholic Action and St Vincent de Paul and spent much of his spare visiting and caring for the poor.

In 1943 Italy switched sides and German troops occupied northern Italy. In September 1944 Josef was conscripted into the SS and taken with other recruits to Könitz in western Prussia for three weeks of training. On October 4, his unit

was to take the oath of loyalty to Adolph Hitler.

But he refused.

“I cannot take an oath to Hitler in the name of God,” he declared. “I cannot do it because my faith and conscience do not allow it.”

His courageous act of resistance is explained in part by his convictions before the idolatrous fascist cult of leadership: “Today we must show the masses that the one leader who alone has the right to complete unlimited authority as our guide is Christ,” he declared.

On March 19, 2017, the Feast of Saint Joseph, Pope Francis described Nusser as “a model for the lay faithful, especially for fathers, who we remember with great affection today.”

In America, Blessed Josef Mayr-Nusser can serve as a model for lay leadership in defense of the faith against encroaching ideologies that threaten Christian models of family life, and as an inspiration for action in solidarity with others.

His feast day (in Italy) will be October 3. ♦

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ST. THOMAS MORE & PATRIOTISM

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However, it is his heroic stance against the whims of power as a bastion of rock solid principle that make St. Thomas More the model patriot. As Saint John Paul II stated when he declared St. Thomas More Patron Saint of Statesmen, "What enlightened his conscience was the sense that man cannot be sundered from God, nor politics from morality." St. Thomas, wrote the sainted pope, "distinguished himself by his constant fidelity to legitimate authority and institutions precisely in his intention to serve not power but the supreme ideal of justice."

If we were to put that conviction into practice, we would sanctify the exercise of patriotism. ♦



THE FACE OF THE LORD

JOHN J. FLYNN III

IS FAITH, LIKE HOPE, A THING WITH feathers, or a thing with thorns? It is the latter, we know already, yet on the thorns hangs the thing with feathers.

Or is faith no more than a syllogism, or an equation? Our faith is placed in nothing so lifeless, or in any idea, ideology, principle, or philosophy, but in a person who has justified our unfailing trust by his death. Faith is encounter with the living God, outside of whom there is no love, and therefore nothing good since it is love alone that has given us everything good. And faith is no mere declaration of belief, no incantation, but a life lived in fidelity to the words of faith. Who would deny that we must at least mean the words we use to profess our faith? Yet whether we meant what we said depends on the lives we live thereafter. By that life we prove our faith.

Faith, then, is a life lived for the sake of love, and no mere human love but the love of God, with whose heart we love as we grow in faith, ever striving to love perfectly, precisely as we were commanded by the Lord himself. And how like a death it is to grow in this love, a reality laid bare with terrible clarity by both John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. Indeed, the body and the emotions are tormented by the infusion of divine light, the will crucified as we grow in love, yet there is no hope of progress if we are unwilling to endure this crucifixion: "In fact every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all our affections and lusts. But we do not want to die and therefore Jesus Christ and his call are necessarily our death as well as our life." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 90.)

But as long as we resist, we will pay only lip service to faith, satisfied with little more than the externalities, presenting to the world the face of a hardened heart, my face perhaps, or yours, but concealing the face of the Lord. These are the very habits and failings to which the Lord addressed himself in his messages to St. Margaret Mary about his Sacred Heart. Yet, 350 years later, the Church still struggles against these merely human forces, against self-righteousness, against judgment, the denial of compassion, of charity, of humility.

The Lord wishes the world to find in all his disciples the Lord's own face, the face beheld by those he healed 2,000 years ago; by Mary Magdalene; by the woman who washed his feet with her hair and her tears; by the woman caught in the act; by Jairus, and by the centurion; by Peter on the night of the Lord's agony; by the woman at the well; by the man born blind; by Zacchaeus. The Lord said it himself, quoting Scripture: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." And, speaking for himself, and of course for the One who sent him: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

Charity and the fruit of charity, mercy, require no compromise of orthodoxy. To the contrary, it is orthodoxy that demands of us both charity and mercy, and it is charity and mercy from which all orthodoxy draws its life, without which orthodoxy is no more than the stillborn thing of which we are warned in the Letter of James.

The Church will be renewed when she is converted, when all is removed that obscures the face of the Lord. On this the Lord waits. ♦

1. How did you come to the Legal profession?

Originally I was working and studying in the medical field, but it eventually became clear to me that I needed to go in a different direction. A college classmate of mine called and told me he had been accepted into law school on a full scholarship. My interest was piqued immediately. There was not really much forethought on my part. I rode a wave of divine providence into a profession which, in retrospect, seems to fit my skill set.

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

My mom was a daily communicant who always made sure we practiced our Catholic faith from day one. In high school, I met an influential friend through our parish youth group who would later become a priest at St. Michael's Abbey. He introduced me to a large Catholic family in the area whose example also made an important impact on me.

3. Favorite book?

It would be arbitrary for me to choose a favorite, but Augustine's *Confessions* certainly comes to mind.

4. Favorite saint?

Saint Joseph. Speaking of him, Saint Teresa of Avila once said, "Would that I could persuade all men to be devout to this glorious saint, for I know by long experience what blessings he can obtain for us from God." Our family has found this to be true.



5. Favorite verse or story from scripture?

There are many, but I often find myself repeating that plaintive cry of the publican: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13)

6. What do you appreciate most about the faith?

The faith gives meaning and purpose to everything. There is no better explanation for the tragedy of the human predicament than the wound of Original Sin. We all do things to each other which we know we should not do. We also experience what Catholic writer Blaise Pascal described as default feelings of "forlornness" and "emptiness". In short, we have an acute sense that something has gone wrong. Human nature itself seems to have been corrupted, which fits in very well with the idea of Original Sin.

But our faith explains not only the cause of our wound, it also tells us how to heal it—we need to employ the heart. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all

your mind and with all your strength.... Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:30-31.) Still, no matter the greatness of our love, it is obvious that we cannot achieve true happiness in this life. And so we have been given that clear-eyed statement of Catholic belief and purpose: "God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in heaven." (Baltimore Catechism)

7. Advice for a young Catholic lawyer?

The day-to-day work of most lawyers does not involve issues of pressing importance to the faith today, such as religious liberty or human rights. No, most of us are like Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, who wanted to be a missionary in distant lands, but was content instead to do small things well within her own monastery in France. My advice would be to work out your salvation within the confines of your own office. Put in a good and honest day's work. Be kind to your support staff. Be charitable but firm with opposing counsel and clients. Use those temporary breaks throughout your day as moments for short mental prayer. Do the small things well. ♦