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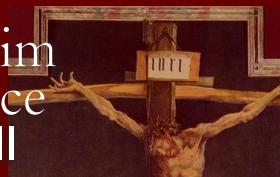
ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY
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VOLUME 19 ISSUE 7

Ben Hur: Small
or Significant
GREGORY WEILER



The Isenheim
Altarpiece
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BEN HUR: TERRIBLY SMALL OR AWESOMELY SIGNIFICANT

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN GREGORY N. WEILER

How many of you remember Ben Hur, the “story of the Christ,” the winner of 12 Academy Awards? Weird, but while crossing the High Sierra on an 85-mile backpacking trip up the backside of Mt. Whitney, a scene from that movie kept popping into my mind. The scene was the worn-out Tribune Sextus being replaced by the young brutal Tribune Messala. Sextus muses about a new holy man in Judea a man who “is different. He teaches that God is near, in every man. It’s actually quite profound, some of it.” Messala scoffs and tells Sextus to go to Capri for wine, women and song.

In tromping on foot across a mountain range of granite, the magnitude of creation is an inescapable reality. Likewise the cosmos at night with no light pollution is seemingly infinite. A single human being facing the reality of creation without the illusion, the buffer, of street lights, cars, buildings and media, is faced with a choice: One is either terribly small or awesomely significant. Our insignificance seemed pretty clear in a huge thunder/snow storm on Mt Whitney. Our awesome significance is less apparent which I guess is why we mistreat each other so. The reality of our significance requires both reason and divine revelation. Even a knucklehead can observe and figure out that the physical universe with its magnitude and design didn’t just happen. But to then make the giant leap where each one of us partakes in the divine nature of the creator, being made in the creators image, being eternal (when that ol’ cosmos will pass away in a few billion years or so) is not intuitive. It is “actually quite profound” to be told by Our Lord and to believe that we do “have the power to become children of God” (John 1), that we have been assured of an eternal destiny (multiple references).

Funny but even now we are faced with the choice of Messala, wine, women and song, or of Christ and eternal significance.

Faith is necessary to trust in the reality of our significance and is a grace. But ours is not an irrational faith and is supported by both the well-documented proof of our supernatural nature and just looking around and the divinity manifested in others. As Catholics, this is our faith, our hope, and what we trust in. I take pleasure in the fact that unlike the granite and Milky Way I can love and praise God with mind and soul even while tending my blisters. God is indeed near, in every man. PAX ~ GNW

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



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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:

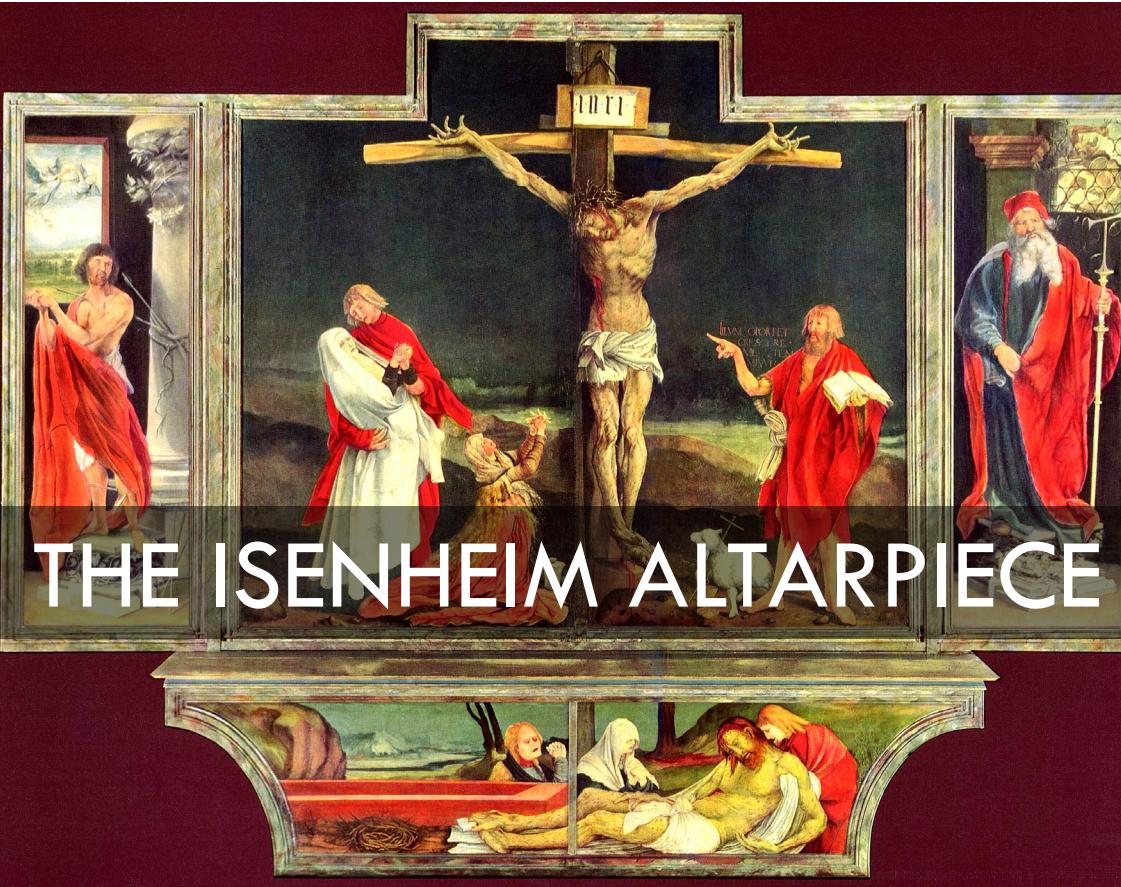
- strive to live an exemplary Christian life and apply the principles and ideals exemplified by St. Thomas More in their daily lives and encourage same in the legal profession.
- attend monthly meeting of the Society and provide personal support to the St. Thomas More Society.
- attend and support the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

JOHN J. FLYNN III

In 1997, by the strangest of coincidences (or perhaps by other means), my family began a friendship with the Veto family in Paris. I first met Miklos and his wife, Odile, after a morning daily Mass at St. Rosalie's in the 13th arrondissement. Miklos is a philosopher and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and his wife Odile, an accomplished linguist and author and lecturer on Claudel, Bernanos and Peguy. They were standing next to me in a little side chapel where Mass was said. There were no more than 10 worshipers in attendance. Of the 10, as I recall, Miklos, a convert from Judaism, was the only one among us who knelt at the Agnus Dei.

At the greeting of peace, I greeted the Vets in English, which appeared to take them slightly aback. Perhaps it was that lone aberration that prompted them, but they were both waiting at the bottom of the entrance steps after Mass, at which time they asked if I was an American. The question somehow produced an instant congeniality and a friendly, thoroughly engaged conversation, as natural as if we had been friends for years. We walked in the direction of their apartment as we talked. When we reached the point of their

destination, they asked if I would join them for evening drinks and appetizers a couple days hence. I did, and a close friendship soon developed, and then expanded to encompass the rest of our families. Their son, Etienne, was ordained a priest of the Chemin Neuf order later that year, and we first met him in Rome in 1998. Etienne recently published a major new theological work, *To Christ Through the Trinity*. In a few days (this is written September 24), he will begin teaching at the Gregorian University in Rome. (They are an extraordinary family; it has occurred to me more than once, and perhaps already to you, that their friendship with the Flynn's represents some kind of "experiment".) All this is prologue.

Several years later, on a trip to Paris, my wife, Susanne, and I were having dinner with Miklos and Odile, who asked about our itinerary. We told them our plan was to travel to Colmar in Eastern France (Alsace), prompted to do so by the suggestion of another friend several years earlier (who has since disclaimed ever even hearing of Colmar). We had no

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)

2014 RED MASS

SEAN MURRAY

In the final moments of Robert Bolt's *A Man For All Seasons*, Sir Thomas More sat alone in the dampness and half-light of the infamous Tower of London prison. Having refused to compromise his principles as chancellor of England, More had been stripped of his position, dispossessed of his worldly goods, shut away in darkness, and threatened with execution. His family—permitted a brief, agonizing visit to his cell—tearfully pleaded with him to set aside his conscience and bend to the king's will. More could not, and was beheaded. In his last moments, as he stood before the royal executioner, More reiterated his commitment to principle with a charity remarkably unblemished by bitterness toward the king who murdered him: "I die His Majesty's good servant, but God's first."

Thomas More, who was attorney, judge and statesman during his life, is not the only attorney to have struggled to put principle before expediency. For centuries Catholic attorneys and judges have attended an annual mass, known as the Red Mass, that is dedicated to strengthening their commitment to virtues such as justice, charity, and temperance. This year the Diocese of Orange will celebrate its annual Red Mass on Monday, October 6, 2014 at Holy Family Cathedral. All involved or interested in the administration of law and justice are invited to attend. This

includes not only attorneys, judges, police officers and civil servants, but also the friends, family and colleagues who support them and their efforts to maintain the highest ethical and moral standards in the administration of law and government.

The origins of the Red Mass lie in the high middle ages of western Europe. Though historical records are scarce, the first Red Mass is believed to have taken place in Paris in 1245. It was likely celebrated in honor of St. Yves, the principal patron saint of attorneys before the canonization of Saint Thomas More. For centuries afterwards, the Red Mass was celebrated in France in La Sainte-Chapelle, the stunningly beautiful royal chapel constructed by King Louis IX to house the crown of thorns and other significant Christian relics.

The Red Mass was originally known as La Messe du Saint-Esprit, the Mass of the Holy Spirit. It became known as the Red Mass because of the celebrant's red vestments, which evoke the tongues of flame that descended on the apostles from the Holy Spirit during the Pentecost. Those flames represent God's bestowal on the apostles of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which include wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge and fortitude. These virtues are of particular importance to those in law or government.

The Red Mass was introduced in England in approximately 1310, during the reign of Edward I, and was celebrated annually in Westminster Abbey at the opening of the Michaelmas term of court. Though

the mass was suppressed during the Reformation, it was later revived and is now held in Westminster Cathedral.

The Red Mass first appeared in the United States in the late nineteenth century and is now celebrated throughout the country. The most prominent of these celebrations is the mass at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington, D.C., which is held on the Sunday before the opening of the Supreme Court's annual term. The Red Mass at St. Matthew's is attended by many well-known attorneys, judges and government officials, both Catholic and non-Catholic. In 2012, six of the nine justices of the Supreme Court attended the service. President Bill Clinton, President George W. Bush and Vice-President Joe Biden are among the senior members of the executive branch who have attended in the past.

The Red Mass in the Diocese of Orange is organized by the Orange County chapter of the St. Thomas More Society, a group of Catholic attorneys, judges, police officers and others who work in the legal community. The members of the STMS strive to strengthen Christian virtues in themselves and to promote those virtues in the secular legal and governmental contexts in which they work. The Red Mass is a very important part of the Society's work.

The STMS is honored to welcome Bishop Dominic Luong as the principal celebrant of this year's Red Mass on October 6th. The mass will begin at 6:00 p.m., with a complimentary buffet dinner to follow. ♦

CALENDAR

Monday, October 6 RED MASS

Mass celebrated by Bishop Dominic Luong - 6:00 p.m.

Complimentary dinner reception- 7:00 p.m.

HOLY FAMILY CATHEDRAL

Wednesday, October 15, 12:00 p.m. Monthly lunch meeting with speaker John Flynn.

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Sunday, October 26, 8-11 a.m. Feed the hungry at Isaiah House.

ISAIAH HOUSE · 316 S. CYPRESS ST.
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Wednesday, November 19, 12:00 p.m. Monthly lunch meeting with speaker Dr. Vincent Fortanasce.

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Red Mass

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**History
of the
Red Mass**

The Red Mass is a Eucharistic celebration of role of the law in God's plan. In 1245, the first Red Mass was celebrated in the La Sainte Chapelle in Paris honoring St. Ives, the patron saint of lawyers. In 1310 the Red Mass began in England where the entire Bench and Bar attended at the opening of each term of the Court. The celebration became known as the Red Mass because the priest and judges wore red robes. The tradition has continued in the United States with members of the U.S. Supreme Court joining the President and members of Congress each year at St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington. The Red Mass is also celebrated in numerous cities around the world.

For more information visit: www.stthomasmore.net

**ORANGE COUNTY
TOP LAWYERS TEAM UP
TO CHANGE LIVES IN**

africa

Well-known trial attorney Peter Callahan (formerly General Counsel to the diocese) and Gregory Weiler, longtime president of the St. Thomas More Society of Orange County, the largest association of Catholic lawyers in the United States, have teamed up to change lives 6000 miles away in rural Africa.

Through mere “coincidence,” these two lawyers have joined with the nonprofit Wells Of Life in an effort to provide clean water in rural Africa.

Weiler explained, “A few months ago I asked Pete Callahan to go to lunch to discuss our legal business. I thought it would be good to get together with Pete, maybe drum up additional legal work and catch up on what was happening. In less than an hour—with no discussion of legal business—I left the lunch completely fired up about providing clean water to rural villages in the Ugandan country side.”

Callahan had recently become frustrated with a charity that he had supported for over 20 years. A full 75% of the funds he and his wife had donated had been spent on administration. About the same time, Callahan met Nick Jordan, who works

with an organization called “Wells of Life.”

YeJordan had participated in building a number of schools in rural Africa, but when he went to visit the schools, he was dismayed to find that almost all the students were boys.

Jordan was told that girls generally didn’t get to go school because culturally in rural Africa, women and girls carry the water. Just getting the water every day is a major endeavor, leaving little time for school. Further, he discovered that the surface water available to most rural Ugandans is often impure, full of parasites, and a major contributor to disease and needlessly-short lifespans.

Jordan eventually founded “Wells of Life,” and along with a sister organization, Fields of Life, began drilling water wells in rural villages in Uganda.

“The need was obvious, the means readily at hand, and Matthew 25 beckoned” said Jordon.

“We call this ‘Christian Feminism’ because for a fixed amount (a well and pump costs \$6,000) with no administrative costs whatsoever, we drill a well in a rural Ugandan village and low and behold, these villages, these brothers and sisters in Christ, have clean drinking water available. The young girls have time to go to school. Education is made available. Their lives are changed forever, and clean, healthy water is provided to a village, typically of over 1,000 people,” Jordan said.

“To liberate women from being treated as beasts of burden, daily carrying 45 pound water containers to and from polluted streams and ponds is our great privilege.”



Weiler and Callahan have teamed up with well-known financial advisor Ralph Linzmeier to move forward with their goal of digging 1,000 water wells in Uganda in the next couple of years.

"Where else can you make an immediate difference with no money lost to administration, and change the lives of 1,000 folks 10,000 miles away?" said Weiler. "We can't do everything but this is something we *can* do. It's achievable, and there is an urgent need."

Callahan added, "We have folks dedicating wells to their deceased parents or their other loved ones and then traveling to Uganda to visit "their" well. When we visited

the village

where our

well was

drilled,

we saw

the plaque

with our

family name and

my daughter

and grandson

experienced the

utter gratitude

of the villagers.

All of our lives

changed forever."

The men are challenging Catholic communities and individuals to fund living memorials for special priests and bishops. On August 24, a

well was dedicated to Monsignor Tony McGowan. At age 99, McGowan is the oldest living priest in the Diocese of Orange. The dedication was personally presented by Bishop Kevin Vann. And, a well has just been donated in the memory of Bishop Cirillo Flores, who died recently.



Bishop Kevin Vann is joined by the Wells of Life advisory board and Msgr. Anthony McGowan at San Juan Capistrano at the dedication of the Msgr. Anthony McGowan well.



observing that "with seemingly infinite need out there, the opportunity to simply provide clean water and help women seems to strike a true humanitarian chord." ♦



The Knights of Columbus Counsel 7519 at the Mission Basilica San Juan Capistrano became the first Knights of Columbus Council in the country to fund a water well as a living memorial for its name sake, Monsignor Paul Martin, who died in 2004. The Mission Knights had long considered a memorial to their name sake and decided to forego a bronze plaque, instead funding a living memorial.

"Being so humble, Monsignor wouldn't want a plaque. I think he has a wide smile in heaven thinking about our parish caring for folks they'll never meet in Africa out of sheer love," said Grand Knight Steve Mandala.

The Wells of Life clergy initiative is being proposed county-wide with the hope and taking the lifesaving project nationwide.

Jordon concluded by

ISIS AND CHRISTIANITY

PATRICK E. WHALEN

The prophet Daniel and the whole Jewish people were enslaved in Persia by King Cyrus the Great (580-529 BC) as related in the *Book of Daniel*. This prophet finally and desperately went into three weeks of penance and prayer, asking to know how much longer the Jews were to be held in captivity. Finally after weeks of prayers and fasting, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in Chapter 10:

12 He then said, ‘Daniel, do not be afraid: from that first day when, the better to understand, you resolved to mortify yourself before God, your words have been heard; and your words are the reason why I have come.

13 The Prince of the kingdom of Persia has been resisting me for twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the Chief Princes, came to my assistance. I have left him confronting the kings of Persia

14 and have come to tell you what will happen to your people in the final days. For here is a new vision about those days.’

The point here is that in the realm of Spiritual Warfare, there seem to be evil spirits assigned all over this world who have geographic boundaries! The scripture above identifies **Persia**. It is important to know that by 550-530 BC, the western **Persian Empire** of Cyrus included not only Persia, but also modern day Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

Spiritual warfare, like civil litigation, is something to avoid. It may be best

to not even think about it. But there comes a time when many of us become a defendant. Christians in the Middle-East are being prosecuted as defendants in unspeakable ways. The internet and press are full of stories

about ISIS or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. There are those wrapped warriors depicted in photographs and video tape marching in Syria and Iraq with the Islamic “black standard” flags and the white writing. I am informed that the most prominent writing on those black standard flags read: “*There is only one god, Allah and the prophet Muhammad is his messenger.*” Their message is to immediately convert to their jihadist version of Sunni Islam or die. Their methods are barbaric and uncompromising.

What is our individual and Catholic response?

At first blush there is the general advice of St. Paul in Ephesians 6:10-18:

The Armor of God

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil



in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.”

So the Word of God counsels us to be fitted with truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith and the Word of God. But how many of us have consistently “put on” those qualities

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

ISIS AND CHRISTIANITY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8)

even in our daily lives? But those are our holy weapons, along with praying on all occasions with requests for the Lord's people.

In light of the above, the Spiritual Warfare tactics at our disposal are limited. The type of armor recommended by St. Paul seems to exclude the violence of a Holy Crusade, a 3rd Iraq War where trillions of dollars have already been spent and priceless blood spilled- only to arouse ISIS as the "Prince of Persia's" latest response. History demonstrates that violence leads to more violence. So what should our tactics be?

A specified first step is daily prayer for the world's persecuted Christians and other religious minorities. Then a second possible step could be participating in local ecumenical and interfaith activities with moderate Muslims of good will. Another option is to support religious orders in the Middle East that serve the oppressed and that need our financial support. Finally, a pilgrimage to the Holy Lands at the right time is a transformational and spiritual tactic not to be underestimated. These are just a few of the possibilities. My personal choices are daily prayer for the victims of ISIS and financial support of the *Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land* which safeguards and serves the Christian presence in the Holy Lands (www.ffbl.org).

But whatever each one of us can find and do, we must do it now in response to the spiritual warfare being brought upon our brothers and sisters in Christ. The mass executions, the abductions of women and children with unspeakable violence go unabated. They desperately need us now!

Ultimately, we are now in a very real war of ideas "... *against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*" Ephesians 6:12 It is likely that the struggles and carnage in the Middle East are a reflection of what is also happening in the unseen world of spiritual forces as revealed in the Book of Daniel. Refusal to engage in the battle is to lose it.

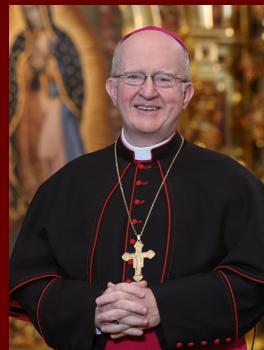
Remember that Jesus admonished us, "*He who is not with me is against me.*" Matthew 12:30 ♦

Editor's note: While it is beyond the mission of the STMS to propose concrete responses to Islamic terrorism, the author's suggestion that we start with personal holiness through prayer, a Sacramental life, and service is sound Catholic teaching.

You are invited.

RED MASS

Join us
October 6, 2014



We are honored to welcome Bishop Kevin Vann to his second Red Mass in Orange County and seek his blessing on the dedication and mission of our local legal community.

Red Mass begins at 6:00 p.m.
The complimentary dinner reception is at 7:00 p.m.

Holy Family Cathedral
566 S. Glassell St
Orange, CA 92866
(714) 639-2900

Questions about Red Mass should be directed to Bill Malecki at bmalecki@yahoo.com

Sponsorship opportunities for Red Mass should be directed to Fabio Cabezas at fabiocabezas@cox.net

THE ISENHEIM ALTARPIECE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

Isenheim Altarpiece, of which I had never heard, to some embarrassment. I have since forgotten what else Miklos said about the Altarpiece, but his comment provoked me to resolve silently to see the Altarpiece if I could while we were in Colmar. It is maintained at the Unterlinden Museum, which houses a relatively small collection, though the housing is spacious because it was once a monastery church. After entering the museum, finding one's way to the Altarpiece is a bit like walking a labyrinth, but when I finally found it, I was dumbstruck, and nailed to the floor.

Unlike every other image of the crucified Jesus I have seen, there is no evidence in the image of dignity, serenity or peace. It is the ghastliest image of the crucified Jesus I have ever seen. Jesus is shown on the cross after his death, his hanging body distorted and dislocated, his face the bluish color of death, his mouth gaping open, his expression that of agony, agony not unwritten by death. The image of Our Lady is nearly as ghastly. Her face is partially obscured by her veil, her skin as white as if she had all lost all blood as her Son

had no other reason for adding Colmar to the itinerary. Miklos asked whether our purpose was to see the

bled, and her expression of one who is barely alive. (Matthias Grunewald painted the image around 1512, during a severe plague. I encourage you to read more about the circumstances of its creation and veneration.)

I stayed in that place for what seemed a very long while. I have thanked God ever since for the shock induced by the image. The image of the crucified Jesus dominates the landscape of every Catholic church, capturing every aspect of our salvation: the incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection. What greater grace at Christmas, Good Friday and at Easter, than to be shocked by the reality of salvation, the complacency of mere habit pulverized?

I have written elsewhere about how, on this same journey, we were dazed by the finality of death that we encountered in the municipal cemetery at Lisieux, where St. Therese was first buried in the Carmelite plot purchased there for the Carmelites by her uncle, Isidore. Nothing, it seemed at that moment, could break the power of death. This realization, too, produced a shock, one of a trinity of shocks endured in a small shard of time. I was shocked by the Altarpiece, and shocked again by the power of death at the Lisieux cemetery.

But then I received the final shock, shocked by the power, the love of God consummated in the death of his Son, which broke death in two, and laid between the broken pieces the path through that narrow, eternally open gate. ♦

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

•
Are you
serious
about
your faith?

For almost 500 years every Jesuit (Pope Francis, for instance) has experienced The Spiritual Exercises developed by St Ignatius of Loyola. The Exercises are an incredible prayer experience meant for folks who want to change, deepen their relationship with God. In Orange County we are blessed to have the Exercises offered over a 9-month period facilitated by STMS Board member and Isaiah House super chef David Werner. The Exercises involve praying through scripture in a unique way and

meeting from time to time to share, led by Dave.

About doing the Exercises 10 years ago, STMS President Greg Weiler said: "I wanted to get closer to God. Most of the Catholics who I most admired had done the Exercises so I thought, I'm going for it. It changed my prayer life forever."

If you are interested in doing the Exercises starting next month call Dave Werner at 949 244-1566.

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