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ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

MARCH 2013

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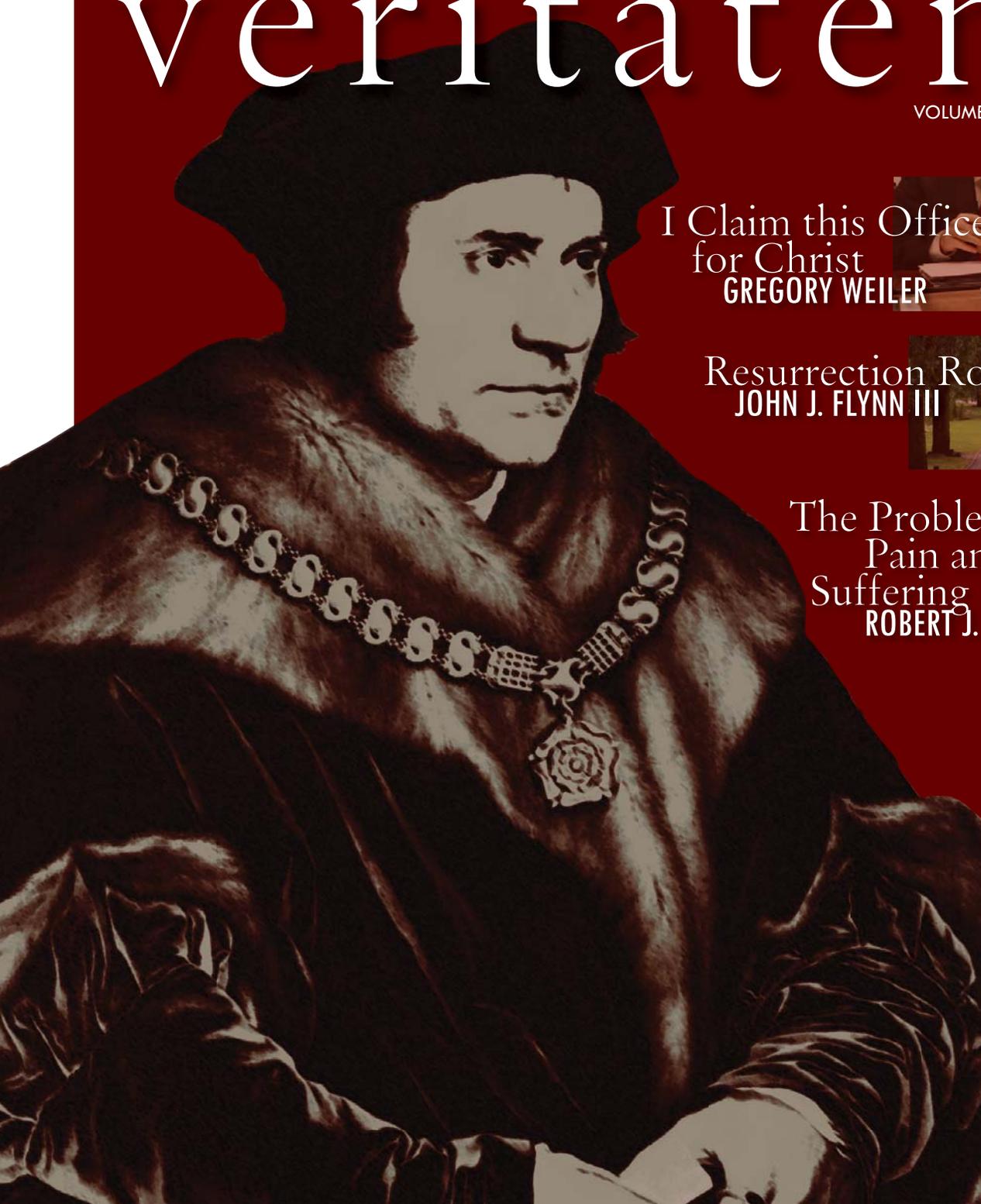
I Claim this Office
for Christ
GREGORY WEILER



Resurrection Road
JOHN J. FLYNN III



The Problem of
Pain and
Suffering
ROBERT J. MATTHEWS



I CLAIM THIS OFFICE FOR CHRIST

GREGORY N. WEILER

How fitting that we start the Easter season with a new Pope in the spirit of Francis and Ignatius. While John Paul the Great and Benedict XVI plowed the seedbed of the New Evangelization with brilliant theology and courageous action, now our humble Pope Francis comes to sow the seeds of holiness in their rich soil. Praise God for his kindness to His people.

On the upcoming celebration of the empty tomb, let us resolve to be Easter people in the legal community, being the joyful face of Christ to everyone we meet and finding the Christ in all we meet no matter how hidden or disguised. PAX and Happy Easter. - GNW

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I thought long and hard after my two friends, Jim and Anne, mentioned that they had crucifixes in their law offices. Jim is a solo practitioner and Anne, like me, is a partner in a large Orange County law firm. What courage and pride in our faith it took to place the unmistakable symbol of our universal Church right in their offices—right where their partners, staff and clients would see—right in the heart of our secular business world.



Would they be labeled religious wackos, or worse, hypocrites for setting a standard for their lives which no one, except Our Lord and Blessed Mother, could entirely live up to? Would they lose clients? What was the reaction of their partners?

The issue of religious symbols had come up during the first couple of meetings intended to organize the St. Thomas More Society. A small number of lawyers wanted to form a group whose stated purpose was to change the face of the legal profession in the pattern of St. Thomas More, the famous martyr, lawyer and chancellor of England, who gave his life for refusing to sanction Henry VIII's first divorce. We asked ourselves how the legal profession had sunk from a high calling to a "trade," a trade held in very low public esteem. We agreed that one clear part of the answer

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 7)

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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

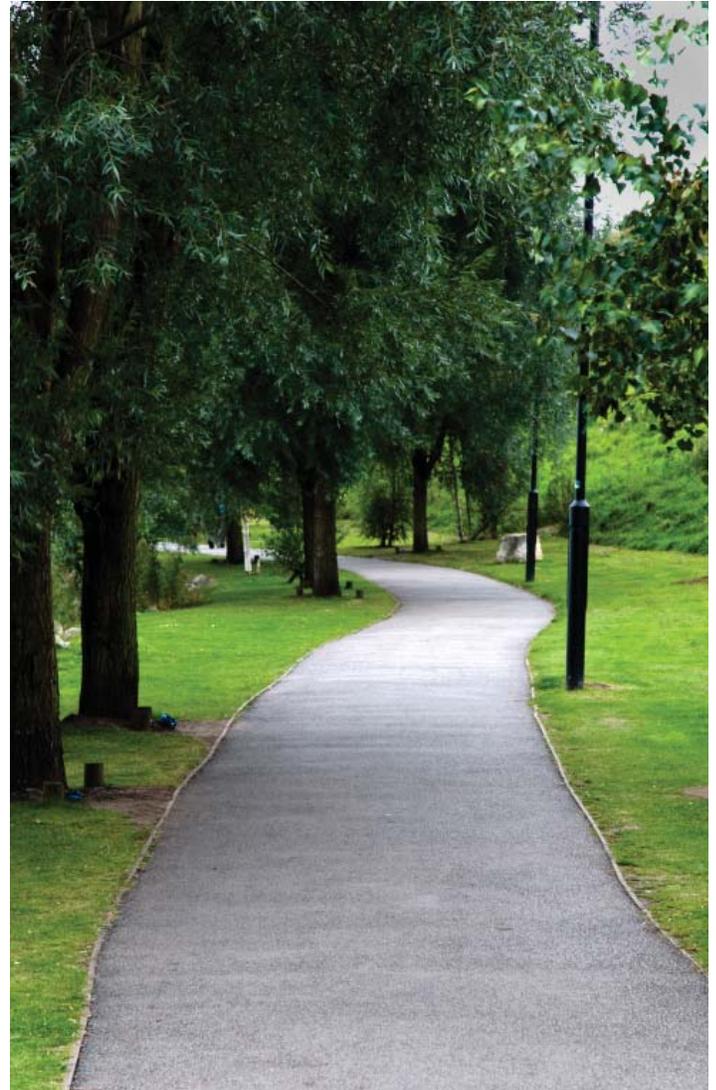
RESURRECTION ROAD

JOHN J. FLYNN III

There are moments in life like Good Friday, so dark that the tumult of hope dies, and there is only the silence of the tomb. Perhaps only then can we rise. To suggest that darkness is the pre-condition of resurrection can seem either a hollow, mocking piety, or the only truth in which hope can ever be placed. For some, whether by nature, will, or happenstance, only when the darkness is absolute, when the seed has fallen to the ground and died, is it possible for faith to germinate, and life to begin.

Is that the message of Easter, of the Resurrection of Christ? Is the Resurrection both a moment in history and a metaphor, the conquest of death, and of every other evil that afflicts us in life? If it is a metaphor, it is one grounded in the objective mystical reality of our burial with Christ in baptism, from which we arise with him, out of the water, as out of a tomb. And every moment of crisis is likewise a moment of passage sometimes as dark as death itself. Yet perhaps only there in that place of no hope in the merely human, where the dead are buried, can we find Christ, who meets us there, and then leads us into the light of day.

So, the good news follows the bad news, as fruit is yielded only when the seed has died: Christ is raised because he first descended into hell, where we were waiting. Only in the suffering of Christ is fully revealed the love of God, where a consummation occurred. There, in the pinnacle of his suffering was the union of the divine and human perfected. There was nothing more that God could give than himself, and now the gift was complete, free of all obscurity, no more prefigurement and foreshadowing, only fulfillment and



revelation. Only there, it seems, in the valley of death, could Christ lead us out, to begin the ascent of Zion. ♦

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTH	DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
April	Wed., April 17, 12:00 p.m.	Lunch meeting will feature Greg Weiler speaking on "The Spirituality of Abraham Lincoln as an American Icon: Village Atheist or Christian Hero?"	Jilio Ryan 14661 Franklin, #150 Tustin, California jilioryan.com
	Sun., April 28, 8:30-11:30 a.m.	Come to help cook and serve breakfast to the homeless of the community at Isaiah House. www.occatholicworker.org	Isaiah House 316 S. Cypress Avenue Santa Ana, CA 92701 (714) 835-6304

READING 34

An immense peace descended upon us, bringing with it the treasures of faith. (Raissa Maritain)

In February, 1906, I fell dangerously ill. . . My illness, which lasted several weeks, was for Jacques [Maritain, French Thomist philosopher] a special occasion for decisive reflections, and gave him the feeling that the time had come to awaken from sleep. It was during those days of anguish that he had thrown himself on his knees, as a person casts himself into the sea to save another, and had for the first time said the Lord's Prayer. His resistance gave way, and he felt himself ready to accept Catholicism, if he must.

On February fifteenth [Léon] Bloy wrote me: "This morning at early Mass. . . I asked Jesus and Mary to take whatever might be meritorious in my tormented past and to apply it mercifully for your recovery, for the peace of your body and the glory of your soul. . . You will be cured and will know immense joy."

"You will be cured. . ." I did not greatly like the idea of prayers for my cure, when I myself had not prayed in a disinterested way since I had lost the faith of my childhood. You lack simplicity when you are far from God.

One day when my illness was at its worst and I was suffering terribly, Madame Bloy came to see me and sat down at my bedside. She told me to pray, and said she was going to give me a medal of the Blessed Virgin. I could not speak, but I felt extremely vexed at what seemed to me a great indiscretion. As Jeanne Bloy heard no answer, she placed the medal around my neck. In a moment, and without truly realizing what I

was doing, I was confidently appealing to the Blessed Virgin, and then fell into a gentle and healing sleep.

My convalescence began, and it was a time of long conversations between Jacques and myself. Yet I still did not feel that a decision was urgent. And it was only on April fifth that we told Léon Bloy of our desire to become Catholics. . .

On June eleventh all three of us – Jacques, my sister Vera, and myself – betook ourselves to the Church of St. John the Evangelist in Montmartre. I was in a state of absolute reserve and could no longer remember any of the reasons for my being there. One single thing remained clear in my mind: either baptism would give me faith, and I would believe and I would belong to the Church altogether, or I would go away unchanged, an unbeliever forever. Jacques had almost the same thoughts.

"What do you ask of the Church of God?" "Faith."

We were baptized at eleven o'clock in the morning, Léon Bloy being our godfather; his wife was godmother for Jacques and Vera, his daughter Véronique for me. An immense peace descended upon us, bringing with it the treasures of faith.

There were no more questions, no more anguish, no more trials – there was only the infinite answer of God. The Church kept her promises. And it is she whom we first loved. It is through her that we have known Christ.

- Raissa Maritain, *Adventures in Grace*, emphasis in original, quoted in *Mary: A Marian Anthology*, ed. Patrick J. Murray (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1979), 19-20.

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THE PROBLEM OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

ROBERT J. MATTHEWS

But what of the pain and suffering that flows from disease and its ilk? Some of it is the product of poor lifestyle choices. We now know that some of it is genetic, such that we are predisposed to certain disease. It actuates when genes are exposed to environmental triggers (the nature/nurture paradigm).

Let us pray for our ill brothers and sisters, those suffering physical, mental and emotional torment. We all suffer from time to time, so we all have a taste of their pain. They, like all of us, are asked to “offer up” their suffering and pain, uniting that sacrifice with the supreme sacrifice of Our Lord on Calvary. Suffering leads to perseverance and purification. Think of Purgatory. One of the most difficult things we may ever be asked to do is suffer, in love, like Christ did for us. Pray that we might take up our cross and accept whatever test the Lord lays before us, in imitation of Christ, as an opportunity to grow in faith and love of God and neighbor.

Theologians, ethicists and individuals – of good faith, no faith and even of bad faith – have struggled through the millennia with the question of why a good God would allow pain and suffering on such a wide scale.

Does suffering and pain prove that there is no God? Some hold that view. Perhaps there is a God, but He does not meet the expectations of some, i.e., He is not what they expect. Recall the Jews of the Old Testament (and perhaps also today) who reject(ed) Jesus as God because He was not what they were expecting; He just did not meet their criteria. Most expect(ed) Him to install peace on earth, but He did not. If so, then all that is needed is that the incorrect expectations be changed to align with the reality of what God expects – that we love Him with our whole heart, our whole mind and our whole soul. After

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 6)

How many of us have asked, “If God is good, why does He allow so many people to suffer in such pain?”

Who are we to question the inscrutable and perfect plan of God? God not only allowed, but required, His only begotten Son to suffer immeasurably to accomplish our redemption, did He not? God clearly did not intend to install heaven on earth.

Should that be the end of our inquiry, namely, to trust God? None of the foregoing answers may completely console or satisfy many Christians, let alone agnostics and atheists. Questioning God’s plan for humanity is bold and audacious; seeking to understand it, however, if only as a mystery that cannot be fully explained, is a proper exercise of our faculty of reason, when guided by Biblical teaching and sound Christian formation.

The pain that is inflicted by other human beings is the product of evil choices by flawed men. This is perhaps the easiest category of suffering to understand. Men make bad choices. Other men (and they) suffer.

God is all powerful; he could have deigned to make us all robots who obey him perfectly and without fail. Rather, He vested each of us with freedom of choice, and a conscience, that when properly formed, leads us to the Light and away from darkness.

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

all, our human understanding is weak and incomplete. It is not all-knowing like the omnipotent Almighty. It turns out that those expectations are simply incorrect. God is the great “I am!”

Now, if there is a God, how can He be a “good God” if He allows pain and suffering of the type that extends beyond flawed human choices, such as that which flows from certain

types of disease, natural disasters and accidents? How indeed? The answer to this inquiry may turn out to be simply that bad genes which are the products of

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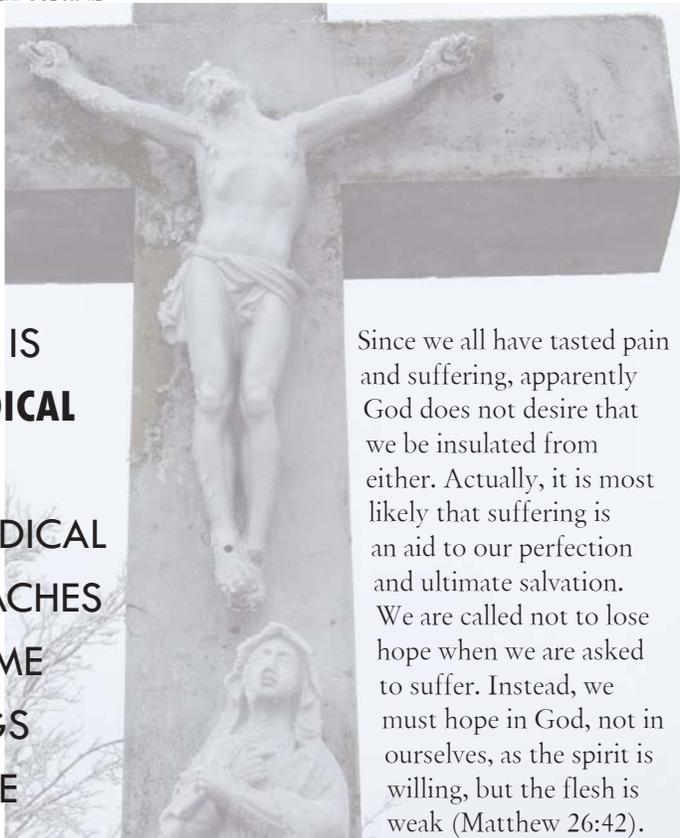
unfortunate mutations, violent weather systems, and serious accidents simply do what they do: cause pain and suffering.

Even still, those who are injured are asked to suffer, but only for a time.

Those who are taken “prematurely” according to our expectations, experience the perfect mercy and justice of God, albeit earlier than they or we might expect. This loss appears tragic (and it is on some levels). It may even seem unjust to some men.

Christianity is indeed a radical religion, the most radical of all; it teaches that we come to see things through the eyes of God, rather than our own, as we study Him and pray to and with Him.

Who among us has not suffered?



Since we all have tasted pain and suffering, apparently God does not desire that we be insulated from either. Actually, it is most likely that suffering is an aid to our perfection and ultimate salvation. We are called not to lose hope when we are asked to suffer. Instead, we must hope in God, not in ourselves, as the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:42).

After all, we are only human. Yet at the same time, we are made in the image and likeness of God, and we are destined for God’s greatness if we follow Jesus.

If we seek to imitate Christ, then we must also take up our cross each day (Luke 9:23), and participate, willingly, in His suffering.

God is exactly Who He says He is. His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36); yet people continue to

demand proof of God out of what they experience here in this world, i.e., out of their own limited understanding. What a huge mistake. That God’s kingdom is not of this world is beyond debate or argument, as all suffer here, but not in the heavenly kingdom.

God does not call us to “sit back on our laurels,” assuming that our salvation is assured. (see Matthew 25, which is both inspiring, and fearsome as to the division of those who refuse to engage in the corporal works of mercy as goats on the left, rather than sheep on the right hand of God who do His holy will). Rather, we are called to be vigorous players in the Grand Collaboration between God and man. We are called not only to save ourselves, but others, and to pray constantly for suffering souls, whether here on earth, or in Purgatory suffering purgation for their sin. Perhaps even though that sin has been forgiven, such that it is no longer a bar to heaven, yet, in the view of many theologians and ordinary people who have been gifted with extraordinary understanding, even forgiven sin must still be purged from the soul.

Christ crushed death, and with it, pain and suffering. He opened the doors to heaven. For all? By no means! Heaven will only be attained by those who believe that Christ, and Jesus Christ alone, is the (only) Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). No one comes to the Father but through the Son (also John 14:6).

Consider also the parable of the vineyard owner (God) who plants a vineyard, leaves, and later sends his servants to collect their share of the produce at harvest time. These servants, sent in three waves, are beaten. The vineyard owner thinks that if he sends his son, they will surely obey the son and give him his due, but the son too (Jesus) is killed so that the evil men (the Devil) might divide up the son’s inheritance (the souls of this world).

(Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:9).

Thus, it is manifestly clear that all will not be saved. Being saved requires active cooperation, faith and obedience to the Word and will of God. Those who ascribe/attribute human motives and characteristics to God the creator of man are at extreme risk. Rather, do what Christ says, and be saved; be spared of pain and suffering for all of eternity. Christ's yoke is sweet/easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). Only

a fool will try to save himself (from eternal death and separation from God known as Hell) on his own. It simply cannot be done. He will suffer a fool's torment, forever. Man alone cannot save himself. Sin, perhaps even sin that is repented of, has consequences. The soul must be completely cleansed and purified to enter heaven. Only the clean will enter heaven, not the unclean (Revelation 21:7-8).

If Christ's life teaches us anything;

it teaches that suffering is redemptive. Thus, though difficult, we should welcome suffering for the sake of union with Christ.

Therefore let us pray in humility and in faith: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of Hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of thy mercy."

Fear not pain and suffering; it is part of God's perfect plan of salvation. ♦

I CLAIM THIS OFFICE FOR CHRIST

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Somehow the legal profession, like society itself, had been secularized. A legal system where naked self-interest, power and rugged individualism has fully displaced the themes of justice, honesty, mercy and equality. We knew the present reputation of the legal profession was the fruit of a practice of law divorced from Judeo-Christian morality and the Natural Law.

The issue for our small group was how to evangelize our profession, how to demonstrate a rooted Christianity, which itself would galvanize our profession.

My heart kept turning to my friends' crucifixes in their offices. How would anyone know I am a Catholic by entering my office? In the past, neither my practice nor my office behavior constituted the "witness" I desired. Now after a long spiritual journey culminating with a Cursillo retreat, I wanted my entire life, including my law practice, to testify to my love of Christ and my commitment to a Christian life.

It is sad to say that I was truly apprehensive in openly declaring my Catholic Christianity. In hindsight I think I was afraid of the standard I was setting for myself—could I meet Christ's expectations? I am a sinner; will I humiliate myself and our Church by openly declaring my faith? What will my partners say? Would I lose clients? God forbid my faith actually affecting my income or my reputation!

After several weeks of on-again, off-again reflection and prayer, I knew I needed to take the small but tangible step of proclaiming my Catholic faith at my office. I journeyed to the local Catholic bookstore and purchased a 6-inch bronze

is that Christian lawyers have been unwilling or unable to integrate their Christian faith into their law practices.

crucifix and placed it on my bookshelf next to a picture of my family.

No public pronouncements, no fanfare, just my own humble proclamation like that of the Spanish conquistadors, "I claim this office for Christ." Indeed, I claim this life for Christ.

The words of our Lord rang clear: "So if anyone declare himself for me in the presence of human beings, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father. But the one who disowns me in the presence of human beings, I will disown in the presence of my Father in Heaven." (Matthew 11:32)

The results from my "daring" display of faith were not earth-

shattering or immediate. In fact, no one has ever mentioned my office crucifix! However, my little reminder of my faith has probably been a topic of discussion in my firm, and I am absolutely sure that every client entering my office takes note: this man is a Catholic Christian, and is not afraid of the label.

After all my internal fretting about what others would think, maybe the most important result of my crucifix is my relationship with our Lord: He knows that I love Him enough to openly declare such love. The thousands of daily glances at my "little reminder" help this sinner try to be the face of Christ every day. ♦

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