

St. Thomas More Society *of San Francisco*

www.stthomasmore-sf.org

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Regis Servus Dei Prius

January 11, 2016

Dear Members and Friends of the Society:

“Grant me, O Lord, a sense of good humor. Allow me the grace to be able to take a joke to discover in life a bit of joy, and to be able to share it with others.”

These words are part of a prayer written by our patron St. Thomas More and prayed daily by Pope Francis (and the topic of our recently concluded 8th Grade Essay Contest). In this vein, let me kick off 2016, the 79th year of our Society, with the following:

God and the devil have an agreement regarding responsibility for damages to the great wall separating heaven from Hell which periodically requires repairs due to intense heat exposure on one side. The agreement provides that they will alternate the performance of any necessary repairs. Following the most recent wall failure, God and the devil meet to discuss the repair. God starts the meeting by telling the devil that is his turn to fix the wall. Satan responds, “No it’s not, I fixed it last time.” God, pulling out the heavenly records, shows the devil that indeed, the last repair was performed by Him. Nevertheless, the devil refuses to make the repairs. When God tells the devil that He intends to sue, the devil responds, “Oh yeah, where are you going to find a lawyer!”

We’ve all heard (and enjoyed I hope) our share of lawyer jokes. I’ve never thought that the jokes are personal, just society’s way of venting some of the frustration that goes with living in a very complex and oftentimes unpredictable system that puts us as lawyers at the forefront of the struggle to provide an orderly and just society.

But I also think that the very existence of the entire genre of lawyer jokes illustrates the difficulties and stresses we face every day in our practices or on the bench. We are vital to society's quest for a process that promotes the common good while protecting the rights of individuals, but the road thereto is long, curved and bumpy, and often filled with disillusionment and disappointment. As Bismarck once said, "Anyone who loves sausage and respects the law should never watch either one being made!"

Statutes are often poorly drafted or incomprehensible, witnesses don't testify as prepared, opposing counsel are sometimes obnoxious, judges overworked and sometimes underprepared, calendars overcrowded, client expectations unrealistic – not to mention the headache of trying to run a business, meet monthly billing cycles, marketing, MCLE, firm obligations – the list goes on and on. And as Catholics, we also know that we are called every day to put into practice in our work Christ's great commandment, to love God above all and love others as we love ourselves. How do we do that?

One important way is through fellowship among other lawyers and judges who share the same professional ups and downs, and more importantly share the same faith that guides the way we live and work. The need for this fellowship is why the St. Thomas More Society was formed and exists. The Society provides the opportunity to:

- Attend a monthly luncheon where we get together in an informal and friendly gathering to enjoy a meal and hear a speaker. The speaker for this month's luncheon (January 21 at the Family Club – see the attached reservation form for details) is U.S. Congressman, Eric Swalwell from the 15th Congressional District. Congressman Swalwell will be speaking on a variety of items, including the operation of Congress, important issues in this Congress, and the upcoming election;
- Get involved with the Society's service project with the DeMarillac Academy, a Catholic grammar school in the heart of the Tenderloin;
- Join with other members at our Lenten Series where member Don Carroll has again agreed to lead us in four one hour lunch-time reflections leading up to Holy Week;
- Come to our Theology on Tap sessions, where we can enjoy drinks and camaraderie and join in discussing a relevant topic;
- Help out at the Pro Bono Legal Clinic of the Oakland Diocese;
- Attend Mass with the incarcerated at San Quentin;
- Participate in our Mentor Program where we pair up newer lawyers with experienced "veterans" for a little bit of guidance and perspective (both ways!);

- Become involved with our Law Student Scholarship Program or the 8th Grade Essay Contest; and
- Most importantly, attend the annual Red Mass and banquet held every year in October where we carry on the centuries old tradition of celebrating Mass for the legal profession and confer our annual St. Thomas More Award.

It's your Society. Let us know your ideas for how it can better serve its function and members. Reach out to one or two Catholic lawyers you know who you think might enjoy being a member or attending our events. Send them a copy of the newsletter.

Chaplain's Corner

"Authentic Christianity"

Have you ever taken a good, hard look at yourself in the mirror? I don't mean that metaphorically. I mean, literally, have you ever stared at yourself in the mirror uninterrupted for a long period of time? It's unsettling. I can't stand it for more than a minute or two.

Psychologists have studied the phenomenon and concluded that looking at your reflection for more than ten minutes actually increases anxiety. Here's what some people on the internet have said about the experience:

- "After a while you just have to look away. It gets too weird!"
- "I usually get incredibly frightened looking into my own eyes. It's like realizing you exist!"
- "It seemed like someone else was looking back. It was just so hard to believe that it was me. I even screamed."

The reason for this response is that we are not used to reflecting on ourselves outside of a social context, that is, in isolation. The way we approach ourselves and others is always interconnected. What psychologists call Relational Frame Theory suggests that the concept of the self and the concept of the other are learned interdependently over the course of a lifetime. One psychologist puts it this way: "Whether we intend to or not, we define ourselves in terms of others – the groups we belong to, our roles in those groups, our relationships with specific people, how we are like them, and how we are different."¹

¹ Emily K. Sandoz, Ph.D., "Seeing you in My Mirror," www.psychologytoday.com/blog/living-your-body/201401/seeing-you-in-my-mirror (Jan 2, 2014).

However, a serious dip into the waters of Christianity tends to rip us out of the normal social milieu, causes us to re-examine mundane roles and responsibilities, and compels us to question social constructs that otherwise we might take for granted. It's the power of self-identification in God that removes us from the ordinary. In every age, courageous Christian men and women have challenged prevailing social norms that are inconsistent with Gospel values. Many times they paid with their lives and, most of the time, experienced social ostracization and religious persecution.

When I was applying for law school almost twenty years ago, I had an interview with a professor of health law at Boston College. I remember her telling me that the great thing about being a lawyer is that, with specialized legal knowledge, we are able to "pull the levers of society." What a powerful image. But I have to wonder whether, sometimes, the levers are pulling us.

Are we afraid to admit that we are Catholic at work? Are judges fearful that they will not be re-elected if they identify their religious affiliation as Christian? How many of us neatly separate Sunday morning from the rest of the week or lovingly offer the Sign of Peace at Mass and then contradict that sign in depositions, hearings, and interactions with opposing counsel? Are we brave enough to stand up for the unborn, for example, and *Walk for Life* on January 23rd (<http://www.walkforlifewc.com>)?

In the 1994 Disney movie, *The Lion King*, Simba is a young lion prince whose Father, Mufasa, is killed in an assassination plot orchestrated by his jealous brother, Scar, who then blames the death on the young Simba. Racked with self-doubt and guilt, Simba flees the pride of lions to live alone in exile. In one poignant scene, Simba hears his Father's voice coming from the skies, reminding him that he is Mufasa's son and the one true king.

Just as Mufasa reminds Simba of who he is and his innate dignity as the one true king, our Father in heaven calls us to remember our dignity as his children. He calls us to remember who we are every day, to take our rightful place at his side, and to be his chosen ones upon whom he has put his Spirit and with whom he is well pleased (Luke 3:22). Our dignity as Christians is no less than this.

In this New Year, I urge you to remember your baptism and who you really are, to gambol out of the ordinary and gamble on authentic Christianity.

Father Roger Gustafson, Chaplain

January Luncheon

Date: Thursday, January 21; 12:00 noon
Location: The Family Club, 545 Powell Street, San Francisco
Speaker: U.S. Congressman, Eric Swalwell

If you wish to attend, use the attached reservation form, respond to the Evite invitation or simply email Andres Orphanopoulos at Orphanopoulos@gmail.com.

2016 Dues

The 2016 Membership Form is attached to this letter and may be used to pay your dues and to update membership records. Annual dues for 2016 are \$75.00 for attorneys with five years or more practice and \$25.00 for retired attorneys and those with fewer than five years of practice. Law student membership is free. Your dues are essential to the Society and enable us to fund events, attract quality speakers, and award scholarships, so please get them in. You can make your dues payment through PayPal or Venmo by following the links provided above.

We are continuing our efforts to attract new members, particularly among younger lawyers, and we encourage you to help us recruit new members to join the Society. Feel free to start by forwarding this newsletter to someone you think may be interested in joining. Remember that lunch is free for prospective members, so bring along a colleague, a friend, a parishioner, or even opposing counsel to our January lunch.

Returning to the lawyer joke that started this newsletter, in fact God has plenty of lawyers he can call on regarding the wall repairs. First, in addition to St. Thomas More, at least sixty other Saints, Blesseds and Venerables have been members of our profession. (In coming newsletters this year I will include the stories of some of these holy lawyers). Second, God has us. We are each called to represent Him every day - as excellent lawyers who care, and who try to practice law and serve others guided by our Catholic faith.

I hope to see all of you at the January luncheon and other Society events. If you want more information or wish to share an idea, please contact me or any member of the Executive Committee.



Matthew F. Graham
President

ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY JANUARY 2016 LUNCHEON RESERVATION

THE FAMILY CLUB

575 Powell Street, San Francisco

Please use this Form to reserve your spot at the luncheon and to make payment.

_____ I plan to attend the St. Thomas More Society Luncheon at 12:00 noon on
January 21, 2016, at The Family Club, 575 Powell Street, San Francisco

Please reserve _____ place(s) \$52 per person.

Please reserve _____ place(s) \$42 per person (fewer than 10 years in practice).

Please reserve _____ place(s) \$25 per person (law students and clergy).

There is no charge for first-time prospective members of the Society.

Member Name: _____

Member e-mail: _____

Names of other attendees for whom payment is submitted:

I am bringing the following potential members as a Guest of the Society (no charge):

The total amount of my enclosed check is \$_____.

Please make checks payable to the "St. Thomas More Society of San Francisco." If you RSVP and cannot attend, please let us know in advance. Cancellations on less than 48 hours cannot be reimbursed.

Please return this form and your check to our Treasurer:

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**ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO
2016 MEMBERSHIP FORM**

*Use this form to pay your annual dues and update your membership record.
New members may use this form to join the Society.*

Name: _____

Firm, Company, Court, or School: _____

Area(s) of Practice: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Parish: _____

Year Admitted to Bar: _____ **Retired from Practice?** _____

Law Student? _____ **Note: Law students membership is free.**

Would you like to participate in our Mentor Program as a mentor or mentee?

Please accompany this application with current dues payment. Annual dues for 2016 are \$75.00 for attorneys with five years or more of practice and \$25.00 for retired attorneys and those with fewer than five years of practice. Law student membership is free. Please make checks payable to St. Thomas More Society.

Return form and check to:
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