

◆ Ad Veritatem ◆

Volume 5 Issue 3

Official Publication of the St. Thomas More Society

March 2000

MARCH MEETING:

The Right to Die: Whose Right?



"I beseech our Lord to breathe into the reader's breast His Holy Spirit, who can teach him within his heart. Without Him, all that the mouths of all the world would be able to teach in men's ears would avail only little."

Thomas More from
A Dialogue of
Comfort Against
Tribulation

Editor's Note:
"Ad Veritatem"
is Latin for
"toward the truth".

This month's speaker will be Dr Vincent Fortanasce, M.D., Ph.D, a nationally acclaimed neurologist, psychiatrist, bio-ethicist, former Olympic athlete, author, lecturer and family man. Dr. Fortanasce has served as spokesman for the California Medical Association and the Los Angeles Medical Association on patient rights in the California legislature. Currently a Clinical Professor of Neurology and Assistant Professor at the School of Physical Therapy and Biokinesiology at USC, he interned at Cornell University, completed his residency in Psychiatry at Yale and was the Chief Resident of Neurology at USC. He founded the Board of Bio Ethics at St. Luke's Hospital, Santa Teresita Hospital and became Chairman of the Ethics Committee at Arcadia Methodist Hospital in Southern California. He is a member of the prestigious Los Angeles County Board of Law and Ethics. Dr. Fortanasce is host of a new monthly segment on St. Joseph Radio Presents - Medical Ethics, Issues and Answers.

Reservations are not required. For more information, contact Dave Belz at (949) 347-0447 dbelz@kuhnbelz.com, or Anne Lanphar at (714) 800-3225 alanphar@firstam.com.

Everyone is welcome!

MARCH MEETING:

TOPIC: *The Right to Die:
Whose Right?*

SPEAKER: Dr Vincent Fortanasce

WHEN: 7 AM Breakfast on
Wednesday March 15th

PLACE: First American Offices
Lender's Advantage Bldg
3 First American Way, Santa Ana

(See map on page 5)

Why Sacraments?

Fr. Hugh Barbour, O. Praem, Ph.D.
Our Chaplain



Question: *Why does God make receiving the sacraments a condition of our receiving certain graces? It seems like it would*

be a lot easier if there were no conditions at all.

Answer: Your question shows some Protestant influence on your thinking. For most Protestants, the sacraments are just ordinances or laws of the New Covenant, not much different from the ordinances of the Old Covenant, which did not actually confer grace or salvation, but were ritual requirements that symbolized what they did not effect. Catholics, on the other hand, recognize that by

Graces & The Sacraments (Continued on page 2)

Inside This Issue:

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Chaplain's Message | Page 1 |
| The Last Things: Hell | Page 3 |
| Catholic Web Sites | Page 6 |
| Personal Witnesses | Page 7 |
| Thought for the Day | Page 9 |
| From the Writings of More | Page 10 |
| From the Library | Page 12 |

(Continued from page 1) **Graces & The Sacraments**

Christ's power the sacraments of the Church are not mere conditions, but the real causes of grace.

This sacramental principle is clear in Scripture: "Unless a man be born again of water and the spirit, he shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (John 3:5); "Unless you eat My Flesh and drink My Blood, you shall not have life within you. . . For My Flesh is real food and My Blood real drink. . . He who eats Me will live because of Me" (John 6:53, 55, 57); "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37-38); "Get up and have yourself baptized and your sins washed away" (Acts 22:16); "Is anyone sick among you? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint him with oil in the Name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person . . . if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15); "[T]his prefigured baptism, which now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21).

The sacraments confer the grace they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ Himself is at work; it is He who baptizes, He who acts in His sacraments in order to confer the grace that each sacrament signifies."
(CCC 1127).

The Catechism puts it beautifully: "*The sacraments confer the grace they signify. They are efficacious because in them Christ Himself is at work; it is He who baptizes, He who acts in His sacraments in order to confer the grace that each sacrament signifies.*" (CCC 1127). The Jews of our Lord's time were right in understanding that He meant that the sacraments really work; they are real causes of grace. The new birth, nourishment, and healing imparted by the sacraments are of the supernatural order, conferring the life of grace.

It is true that certain graces are conferred on the Christian on the condition of receiving the sacraments, but we should always remember that this is how Christ Himself arranged things. It's no different from saying that the cause of eternal life is having faith in Christ - something without which we cannot receive eternal life. Far from being hoops we must jump through, the sacraments are the powerful gifts of Christ's grace and power, given to us for our strength

and nourishment. †

Reprinted from the Nov/Dec 1996 issue of ENVOY, a Catholic Apologetic & Evangelization Magazine.

SIMPLE TRUTHS



Fulton J. Sheen

**The fact is religion is popular
only when it ceases to be truly religious.
Religion by its very nature is unpopular
- certainly unpopular with the ego. †**

The Last Things: Hell

By Michael Shonafelt, Esq.

This is the third of a four part series on the Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven & Hell. Throughout his life, Thomas More wrote extensively about the Four Last Things as he strongly believed that focusing on these matters would prevent one from losing his soul.

When I was a small boy, my father kept a very large, dusty old book among the treasures in his den. That book was the source of many a nightmare in our home. To open its cover and peer into its many steel-engraved prints was to embark on a frightening journey into unimaginable horrors. The book has made it among the heirlooms in my family's home today. It is a nineteenth century edition of *Dante's Inferno* with graphic illustrations by Gustave Dore. I brought the venerable old work out recently and turned through its pages once more in preparation for the writing of this series. There are scenes of Dante, and his guide, the poet Virgil, touring the multi-tiered chambers of hell. They enter through a large cave in the middle of a remote and gloomy wood. Over the cave's "lofty arch" is inscribed:

THROUGH ME YOU PASS INTO THE CITY OF WOE
THROUGH ME YOU PASS INTO ETERNAL PAIN
THROUGH ME AMONG THE PEOPLE LOST FOR AYE.
JUSTICE THE FOUNDER OF MY FABRIC MOVED
TO REAR ME WAS THE TASK OF POWER DIVINE
SUPREMEST WISDOM, AND PRIMEVAL LOVE.
BEFORE ME THINGS CREATED WERE NONE, SAVE THINGS
ETERNAL, AND ETERNAL I ENDURE.
ALL HOPE ABANDON, YE WHO ENTER HERE.

Dante and his tour guide then move on, deeper and deeper into the depths, speaking to various lost souls who relate the deeds that led to their perdition. As they descend, the punishments grow more and more terrible, in correspondence to the gravity of the sins that led to the condemnation of the residents

of that place. They pass the souls lost to forbidden loves, those who worshipped money, fame and wealth, the souls of those whose lives were dominated by anger, and the souls of the hypocrites. Those guilty of simony are condemned to lie head down in smoking stone cauldrons in the ground. The last place, the very bowels of hell, is cold and frozen over. There sits Satan himself in lonely, desolate solitude.

If Dante were alive and writing today, I think that his work would meet with much less enthusiasm than that given by the literati of early fourteenth century Europe. In these latter days, the doctrine of eternal damnation has all but fallen into the ash heap of discarded Christian devotions and teachings. Hell, along with the Church's teachings on mortal sin, abortion and birth control, has been blacklisted at parish pulpits. In the interest of placating the greatest number of Sunday parishioners, the more unpleasant aspects of Christ's teachings have been dropped, and the doctrine of the faith has been watered down to an insipid assortment of platitudes which provoke no more inspiration than a perusal through the greeting card section of a grocery store.

The removal of eternal damnation from the salvation equation renders meaningless the entire story of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection. If there is no sin and no hell, from what are we being saved? The sacraments, the mass, the crucifix -- all collapse. The Church becomes nothing more than an ancient social club thickly encrusted with empty rituals.

The avoidance of hell as a topic of writing and preaching is understandable, however. That anyone would find pleasure flipping through the pages of Dante's work, or reading the disturbingly graphic



The Last Things: Hell (Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3) **The Last Thing: Hell**

portrayals of hell penned by such spiritual visionaries as Saint Alphonsus Ligouri, would be a legitimate cause for concern. One of the Church's earliest and greatest theologians, Origen (185 – 253 A.D.), could not come to grips with the idea of eternal ruin. In the doctrine he called the *apokatastasis*, or "recapitulation," he theorized that the souls of the damned themselves, and even Satan, would eventually be worked back into the fold of the blessed. As beautiful as Origen's supremely optimistic theory may seem, it is not reality, and due in part to this foundational error, Origen is not numbered among the Church's canonized saints.

A poll of Catholics taken today may reveal many "origenists" among the faithful, those who cannot reconcile God's mercy with eternal punishment. In earlier days, on the other hand, the Church may have been given to other extremes, placing more emphasis on fire and brimstone than on the weightier doctrines of divine love and mercy. But the current de-emphasis on hell has perilous ramifications.

Those dangers were brought out in allegorical fashion for me in a recent ski trip. After hopping off a long chair lift to the summit of the mountain, I turned right to ski the western-most slopes. I pushed off to a grouping of pine trees and skidded over a length of orange tape, laying in the snow. I had no idea what the tape meant, but after a moment's thought, I dragged to a stop, and herring-boned my way back up to find out what I had run over. DANGER! the tape said, NO SKI AREA, ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK! Had I not stopped, I may have met with all manner of perils below. I thought of the possible risks that tape could have warned against. I imagined what fate I could have encountered had I proceeded without going back to read the warning, perhaps a cliff face or a wall of snow hanging tenuously for the slightest trigger to unload its weight upon some unwitting victim.

What may happen to the faithful if the doctrine of hell is neglected in our churches? Everyday, we skirt along the edge of a sheer precipice, most of us completely unaware of the utter peril that is a very real possibility for us. Those in a position to warn us, those who know the abyss is there, are silent. They have let the warning ribbon drop, they have not replaced it, and it is half covered with snow. Are they doing the faithful any favor?

Christ Himself did not neglect to warn us of the possibility of eternal perdition. He used the phrase "eternal fire" no less than eleven times. The same phrase is used 30 times throughout the New Testament. Our Lord's words, if we stop to contemplate their full import, cannot but inspire a holy dread of hell. "*Fear not him who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul,*" He warns, "*fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell.*" (Mt. 10:26.) Elsewhere, Christ describes Himself gathering the fruit of the good seed as well as the weeds; "*just as the weed is gathered up and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of time ...*" (Mt 13:40, et seq.) The parables of hell are laced throughout the Gospels. It is a place of unquenchable fire (Mt. 81:8), undying worms (Mk. 9:48), gnashing of teeth (Mt. 13:42), and the "*devil and his angels*" (Mt. 25:34, 41). If hell were so important to Our Lord, why is it so much overlooked by the Church everywhere today?

Yet, hell was never part of God's plan. It is part and parcel of God's deference to mankind's freedom to either chose God or rebel against Him for eternity; the "*intolerable complement,*" as C.S. Lewis calls it, of placing a creature on earth capable of wholesale rejection of the divine plan. It is the consequence of unrepented mortal sin -- a sin held on to until the very end. This is nothing more than the exercise of the power of human freedom to turn away from God, a self-imposed eternal exclusion from God's love. As the Catholic Catechism states,

Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself. It results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back. (CCC 1861.) In fact, Christ, the Author of Life and the Font of our salvation *cannot* be the creator of hell. "*How could Christ,*" writes the Jesuit Gustave Martelet "*who has thrown himself against death and sin, impose such a loss, even consent to it, given that he has, after all, done everything to avoid it?*" Elsewhere, Martelet has said *Certainly there is talk of fire, worm and the second death that excludes one from the kingdom. . . . But hell, as refusal of divine love, always exists on one side only:*

The Last Things: Hell (Continued on page 6)

Ad Risum Vertere Veritatem*



*Latin for "To turn truth into laughter"

GOD'S CHILDREN

Whenever your kids are out of control, you can take comfort from the thought that even God's omnipotence did not extend to God's kids.

After creating heaven and earth, God created Adam and Eve. And the first thing he said was: "*Don't.*"

"*Don't what?*" Adam replied.

"*Don't eat the forbidden fruit.*" God said.

"*Forbidden fruit? We got forbidden fruit? Hey, Eve...we got forbidden fruit!*"

"*No way!*"

"*Yes way!*"

"*Don't eat that fruit!*" said God.

"*Why?*"

"*Because I am your Father and I said so!*" said God wondering why he hadn't stopped after making the elephants. A few minutes later God saw his kids having an apple break and was angry.

"*Didn't I tell you not to eat the fruit?*" the First Parent asked.

"*Uh huh,*" Adam replied.

"*Then why did you?*"

"*I dunno*" Eve answered.

"*She started it!*" Adam said.

"*Did not!*"

"*Did too!*"

"*DID NOT!!*"

Having had it with the two of them, God's punishment was that Adam and Eve should have children of their own. Thus, the pattern was set and it has never changed.

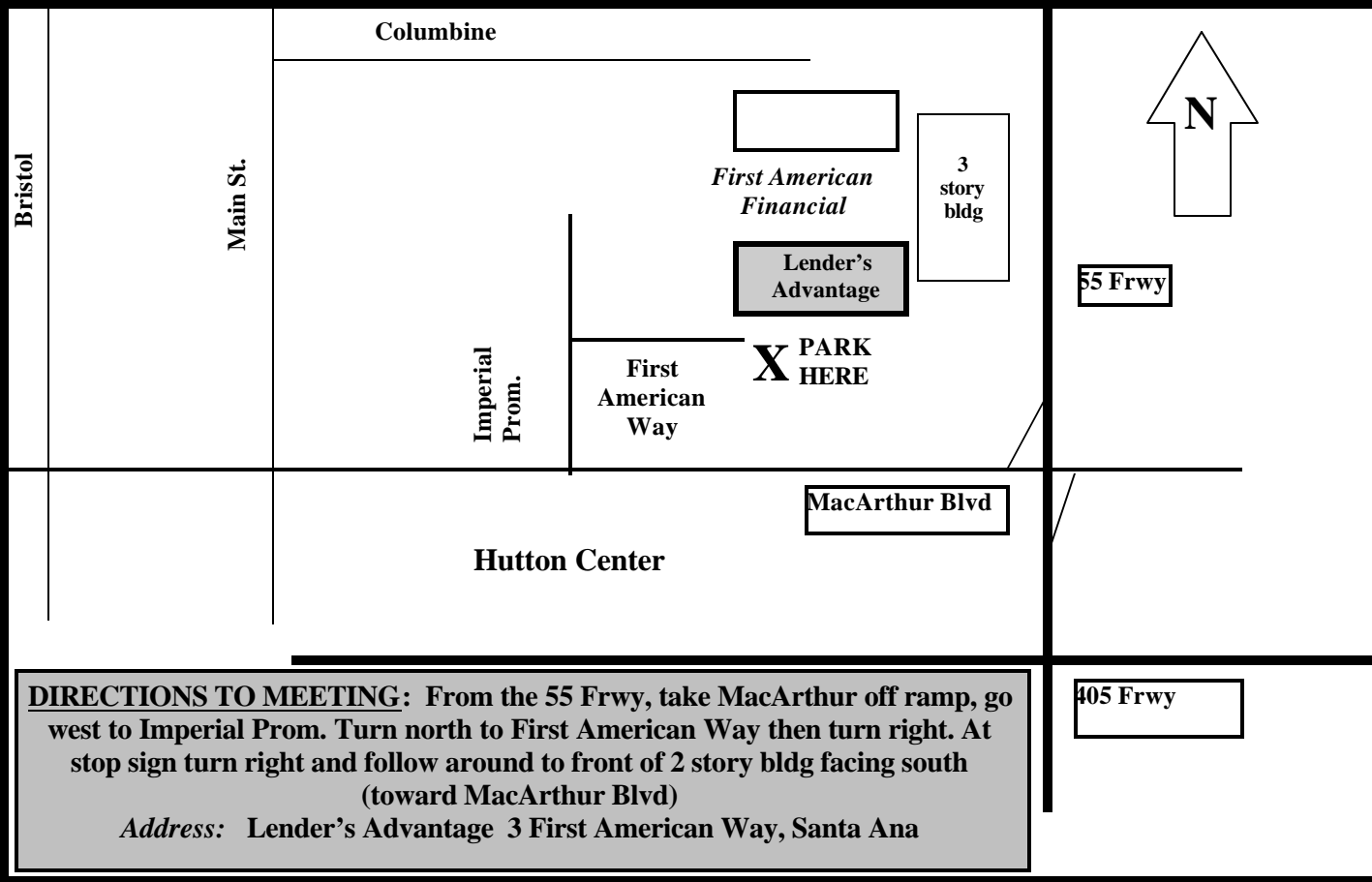
But there is reassurance in this story. If you have persistently and lovingly tried to give them wisdom and they haven't taken it, don't be hard on yourself. If God had trouble handling children, what makes you think it would be a piece of cake for you?



Advice for the day:

If you have a lot of tension and you get a headache, do what it says on the aspirin bottle:

**TAKE TWO AND KEEP AWAY
FROM CHILDREN.** †



Catholic Web Sites

<http://www.stthomasmore.org>

The St. Thomas More Society

*To act Justly, to love tenderly
To walk humbly with your God*
Micah 6:8

Orange County, California

Site Navigation



The More Family

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| ✠ About Us | ✠ Writings of St. |
| ✠ Mission Statement | Thomas More |
| ✠ Our Chaplain | ✠ Links |
| ✠ Monthly | ✠ Biography |
| ✠ Meetings/Events | ✠ Ad Veritatem |
| ✠ More Quotes | ✠ Contact Us |



This is our own web site! Please let us know if you have any suggestions!

(Continued from page 4) **The Last Things: Hell**

on the side of him who persists in creating it for himself.

The Church has made no pronouncements on the number of the condemned, nor even if there *are* any condemned souls. While we may be quick to place a few seemingly obvious candidates there ourselves (like Hitler or Judas Iscariot), the Church has not and cannot make such a declaration itself. We may be sure, however, that the damned are forever separated from the beatific vision. We may also be sure that, just as the blessed, the condemned souls will also be resurrected with their bodies. Accordingly, it is not outside the realm of possibility that the damned also experience some kind of physical pain in their bodies, in addition to the obvious spiritual suffering that comes with the definitive hopelessness of the eternal loss of God.

These elemental truths contain the fodder for manifold meditations on the terrors of the “*second death*.” Such meditations have a salutary effect. They provide a constant reminder that sanctifying grace can be lost, and that we must not grow overconfident to the point of recklessness, or neglect of prayer and the sacraments. Most importantly, however, they should impress indelibly upon our hearts an undying resolve never to offend the loving Creator of our souls. Our hearts, as Augustine reminds us, were made by Him and for Him and they are restless until they rest in Him. On the day that is destined as our home-coming, may each of us finally find ourselves at home, at last -- not shut out by a stubborn unrepented refusal of God’s love and forgiveness. May we find ourselves locked in that loving embrace with Our Lord, there waiting to welcome us with a loving smile. ✠

Personal Witnesses



On Saturday March 4th, Daniel's Inn hosted its fifth annual special all day meeting where Christian attorneys and judges share their personal faith and their experiences in that faith with others in the legal community. The following are brief summaries of these talks. Hopefully next year you can attend this wonderful seminar and share a day of spiritual development with your peers.

STORMS OF LIFE: Attorney John Kays spoke about the storms of life. There is always a certain amount of anxiousness about when the storm is going to end. John, a avid backpacker, enjoys hiking by himself. One of his favorite places is by Sky-Blue Lake in the High Sierras which is a remote valley and is as close to heaven on earth as John has seen. One day John arrived at this area only to find that the weather was getting increasingly threatening. He made it to a campground area and finished erecting his tent just as the 24 hour snow storm began. Several times during the night he had to remove the snow from the top of the tent. During this frightening time, John began to lose confidence in his abilities to deal with nature. In the late afternoon of the next day, the storm terminated as abruptly as it had begun. John decided it was critical to get to a lower elevation as quickly as possible. Retracing his route, he came to the little meandering stream that he had easily crossed the day before which was now a raging, freezing river. When there was no easy crossing point visible, he suddenly remembered that he had a set of gaiters in his backpack. With a great deal of fear and bolstered by healthy shot of adrenaline, he made it across the river and down to safer altitudes.

John has spent a lot of time wondering how to reconcile the fact that (1) salvation is a gift, (2) the wonderful Biblical texts witnessing the great efforts and sufferings of the early saints, and (3) the fact that despite our belief in God, we chose to accede to those acts which are inconsistent with our beliefs and lead us away from God. Our journey to God is not a single step but a long and hard road and requires God's constant help. Final judgment will be given, that is assured. We have Jesus Christ's blood on the altar welcoming us on a continual basis letting us know that salvation is there for those who heed the message and keep trying.

But what of forgiveness? John had hated a woman since he was ten years old. This hatred and bitterness

had gnawed at him for all of his life. As John prayed about it, the only message that kept coming to him was to go and forgive her. The illogic and unfairness of this haunted him: after all, he had been only a child – why did he have to forgive her? Shouldn't it be the other way around? But the message never changed: go and forgive her. John recalled that he had been responsible for teasing her as well as some other forms of harassment. He put these things down in a letter along with a statement of his sorrow and sent it off. One week later he called Dorothy and said simply "Please forgive me for my hurting you." This simple apology set off an hour diatribe from the woman which was loud and full of vile and bitterness. None the less, at the end of the phone call John discovered to his amazement that all his hatred for Dorothy had been removed by Christ!

FORGIVENESS: Judge David Carter spoke on forgiveness. David tries to rediscover his relationship with the Lord each day. He has had many small little things that have sparked a close moment with God. He has also had special unique moments such as visiting Archangel in Siberia where he saw an underground church maintained in a dense forest all through the Communist regime.

Eighteen years ago, David unintentionally helped to falsely imprison an innocent man. When new evidence emerged, the District Attorney moved to have the sentence set aside. After the prisoner, Dwaine McKenny, was freed, he indicated that he wanted to meet with the judge. David was a little bit apprehensive about the meeting but felt that it might bring closure to both parties. Over coffee David found out that Dwaine had turned to the Lord in prison when he had reached the end of his rope and was on the edge of despair. Amazingly he harbored no hatred for his false imprisonment! He was filled with the spirit of the Lord. Now freed, Dwaine was continuing in his Christian ministry reaching out to convicts. It was interesting that Dwaine could only stay outside for brief periods of time before feeling the need to return to the prison to help others.

David also spoke of very personal matters in his life where he had made serious mistakes which had haunted him for over 25 years. He learned that he had to trust the Lord's forgiveness and to seek His help to learn to forgive himself.

Daniel's Inn (Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7) ***Daniel's Inn***

TRUST- THE ANSWER TO EMPTINESS:

Robert Thomas discussed how true trust in the Lord requires us to witness to Him before others. Like many attorneys, Robert has always been a typical A-type personality where setting a goal was his way of dealing with life. He had always believed that you just roll up your sleeves and get to work and that goal will be accomplished. But, every once in awhile there was that nagging thought: "Is that all there is?" Recently Robert received a special email message from a friend:

"A Brick in Life"

About ten years ago, a young and very successful executive named Josh was traveling down a Chicago neighborhood street. He was going a bit too fast in his sleek, black, 12 cylinder Jaguar XKE, which was only two months old. He was watching for kids darting out from between parked cars and slowed down when he thought he saw something.

As his car passed, no child darted out, but a brick sailed out and-WHUMP! -- it smashed into the Jag's shiny black side door! SCREECH...!!!! Brakes slammed! Gears ground into reverse, and tires madly spun the Jaguar back to the spot from where the brick had been thrown.

Josh jumped out of the car, grabbed the kid and pushed him up against a parked car. He shouted at the kid, "What was that all about and who are you? Just what the heck are you doing?!"

Building up a head of steam, he went on. "That's my new Jag, that brick you threw is gonna cost you a lot of money. Why did you throw it?"

"Please, mister, please...I'm sorry! I didn't know what else to do!" pleaded the youngster. "I threw the brick because no one else would stop!" Tears were dripping down the boy's chin as he pointed around the parked car. "It's my brother, mister," he said. "He rolled off the curb and fell out of his wheelchair and I can't lift him up." Sobbing, the boy asked the executive, "Would you please help me get him back into his wheelchair? He's hurt and he's too heavy for me."

Moved beyond words, the young executive tried desperately to swallow the rapidly swelling lump in his throat. Straining, he lifted the young man back into the wheelchair and took out his handkerchief and wiped the scrapes and cuts,

checking to see that everything was going to be OK. He then watched the younger brother push him down the sidewalk toward their home.

It was a long walk back to the sleek, black, shining, 12 cylinder Jaguar XKE -- a long and slow walk. Josh never did fix the side door of his Jaguar. He kept the dent to remind him not to go through life so fast that someone has to throw a brick at him to get his attention.

Some bricks are softer than others. Feel for the bricks of life coming at you.

Robert has experienced no "thunderbolts" in life. This notion of "I did that" as part of the goal orientation has always been part of his being. His father was wise enough to help him find a job with a brick mason contractor over one summer. His first job was to move some concrete bricks from the truck to the brick masons and make sure that they never ran out. He was given a set of gloves to wear. Being a smart 16 year old, it seemed that young Robert was tough and did not need to wear any stinking gloves. He carried the bricks for awhile and the foreman came over to inspect things and found his hands bleeding. He immediately took him over to where the concrete was being mixed and stuck his hand in the raw material. The lye had the desired effect and Robert began to wear the gloves. That was the first time when he realized that there *might* be something of value to learn from other people. Maybe, just maybe, he did not have *all* of the answers. Later on there was a similar experience when a colleague of ten years suddenly visibly changed. He radiated an aura of inner peace to all who came in contact with him. When Robert asked him what had happened, his friend merely invited him to come to Christian Businessmen's Association. Robert gradually came to invite God into his life and began the journey to a new life.

The "brick" in Robert's life came upon exiting the hardware store one-day. He walked past a car with a woman asking for some money. Robert turned a deaf ear and just continued on his way. Several miles down the road, it occurred to Robert that he should have reacted differently. He turned around and went back to the hardware store parking lot only to find that the woman and her car were gone. Robert is still searching for that woman.

THE EXAMPLES WE SET: Hugh Hewitt, lawyer, teacher and author asked, "Do we hide our faith?" We should all have the goal of affecting a change in our GOD trajectories by just a few degrees. Public Christianity carries a heavy burden and we must make sure that

***Daniel's Inn** (Continued on page 9)*



Scriptural Corner:

'If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. 'If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. John 15: 6-7

Comment from the Navarre Bible*:

'If a person is not united to Christ by means of grace he will ultimately meet the same fate as the dead branches—fire. There is a clear parallelism with other images our Lord uses—the parables of the sound tree and the bad tree (Mt 7:15-20), the dragnet (Mt 13:49-50), and the invitation to the wedding (Mt 22:11-14), etc. Here is how St Augustine comments on this passage: "The wood of the vine is the more contemptible if it does not abide in the vine, and the more glorious if it does abide For, being cut off it is profitable neither for the vinedresser nor for the carpenter. For one of these only is it useful—the vine or the fire. If it is not in the vine, it goes to the fire; to avoid going to the fire it must be joined to the vine" (*In Ioann. Evang.*, 81, 3).

**The Navarre Bible, an edition of Sacred Scripture prepared by members of the Faculty of Theology of Navarre University, consists of the New Vulgate, the Revised Standard Version and commentaries. †*

(Continued from page 8) **Daniel's Inn**

we live our "testimony" of the joy within us.

There are many professionals that know when the "red light is on" and are able to talk and act in an effective manner. But when the red light is off they are totally different. How do we behave in the environments that we inhabit? C. S. Lewis spoke of the constant battle between Satan and Jesus for every square inch and every minute of the day. How prepared are we to help sway the battle one way or another? Every action that we do is a subtle turning towards or away from God. Is our trajectory towards God? Do we handle different parts of our life differently?

We have to be careful that pride may enter into our dealings with others. Our education does not guarantee that we are close to God and there could be a person sitting next to us who is uneducated but very much in touch with God. In the US, we often get sneers for stepping out and indicating we are Christian. But consider the persecution going on in China, the Sudan and India and consider what the early martyrs faced for Christ.

Consider these questions:

Do colleagues know we are Christian?

Are our actions the basis of our beliefs?

Do our professional organizations know we are Christian?

Are our actions the basis for our beliefs?

Do we give active testimony?

These tests are given to us each day. How our actions

in God's name will impact others is often not made known to us in this life. Our secular accomplishments are nil as compared to knowing and sharing our faith in Christ. The most humble things that we do to the least of our brethren maybe be the most important in our lives. Maybe these folks in the cars and at the side of the road are angels sent by God. The critical element may be the degree of our teaching our children about God. The greatest untended mission fields today seem to be the children in our churches. We can do it. No one has ever regretted witnessing for Christ.

BORN AGAIN... AND AGAIN: Andrew Guilford spoke on our being spiritual beings. Sometime in the womb we become spiritual. Andrew has never experienced a big "born again" moment: never felt a major crisis situation; never had a personal "Damascus" moment. Jesus Christ has always been a part of his life. He believes that salvation will be based on the degree of relationship with God. Quoting a poet: "Our wings are given, not earned, a feather at a time." We do not have holy places like we used to. Our salvation is to live through the Eucharist on the altar of Christ. Andy serves as a lay Eucharistic minister and when he lays the Host on the tongue there is often a physical glow emanating from the recipient. Andy approaches God through his mind. But, there are many more that accept Jesus through their hearts. There will always be doubts in our life but the commitment to Christ is a continuing daily walk and through this daily interaction our relationship with Him grows into a personal friendship. †

From the Writings of St. Thomas More

MORE ON THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD

More's greatest help in running Chelsea was the capable executor of this thirty-four-acre farm, Lady Alice. How much he trusted her judgment and skill in management is well illustrated by an event that occurred near the beginning of September 1529.

The harvest that year was the first good one in quite some time. In fact, such a famine had developed that More had fed one hundred people a day, at his home, during the winter of 1528. Food had become so scarce and, therefore, theft so prevalent that the government had resorted to punishment by hanging.

Just as this most welcome harvest was completed and all of More's barns were full, a fire broke out, caused "*by the negligence of one of his neighbors' carts.*" The result was the destruction of all of More's barns, part of his house, and several of the neighbors' barns as well.

Lady Alice immediately sent son-in-law Giles Heron to inform her husband. Sir Thomas was at court, attending the King. While Giles stood by, More wrote a quick response. Given the spontaneous, unpremeditated character of its composition, this letter is of special value. Written just seven weeks before he would become Lord Chancellor of England, it reveals More's true mind and character. Few could have written such a letter, having just suffered such crippling losses.

More begins the letter by sympathizing with Alice. But then he points out that, God having allowed this to happen, "*we must and are bound not only to be content but also to be glad [of His will].*" After all, it was God who "*sent us all that we have lost and since He has by such a chance taken it away again, His pleasure be fulfilled.*"

What comes next in the letter must have been quite difficult for the practical-minded Alice to accept. "*Let us,*" he says, "*heartily thank [God] as well for adversity as for prosperity, and perhaps we have more cause to thank Him for our loss than for our gain, for His wisdom sees better what is good for us than we do ourselves.*"

Proceeding along this line of reasoning, he then makes a request: "*Therefore I pray you be of good cheer and take all the household with you to church and there thank God both for what He has given us and for what He has taken from us and for what He has left us which, if it pleases Him, He can increase when He will; and if it pleases Him to leave us yet less, so let it be at His pleasure.*"

More next asks that Alice find out what their neighbors lost and assure them that he will compensate them for it. If it meant that any "*poor neighbor of mine*" would bear a loss because of something that "*happened in my house,*" he writes, "*I would not leave myself a spoon.*"

As for the many practical details following upon this loss, More leaves those to his capable and trusted wife. He asks that she work out, for example, the best course of action to get the corn they will need for consumption in the winter and for seeding in the spring. Since the loss is so great, he realizes, they may not be able to keep the land at all. He asks Alice, in the event that they have to sell it, not to discharge any of their workers without giving them proper provisions or without finding another place for them to go.

Assuring Alice that he will come home as soon as he can, Sir Thomas finishes his letter by sending his good wishes to the children and signing off, "*Your loving husband.*"





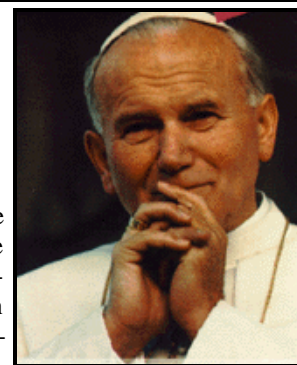
The Pope's Prayer Intentions for March



GENERAL INTENTION

That the Holy Year, a favorable time for repentance and mercy, may foster in us deep and lasting conversion

What needs to be emphasized ... is what Isaiah expresses in the words *"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."* For the Church, the jubilee is precisely this *"year of the Lord's favor,"* a year of the remission of sins and of the punishments due them, a year of reconciliation between disputing parties, a year of manifold conversions and of sacramental and extra-sacramental penance.



**- John Paul II, Apostolic Letter "Tertio Millennio Adveniente",
On Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000
(November 10, 1994)**

"Ascendamus ad montem Domini"! (Let us ascend to the mountain of the Lord, Isaiah 2:3). Yes, let us hasten our steps with faith towards the Jubilee, an extraordinary year of grace, expressed in particular by the gift of the indulgence. Far from being a *"discount"* on the need for Christians to change their life, this requires them to change it even more. The Spiritual commitment we have made so far and which we must also continue ... intends to help all believers become aware of the true meaning of the Jubilee event. *"Repent, and believe in the Gospel"* (Mark 1:15). This is the message that must ring out more and more intensely in the coming months.

May the Jubilee events, scheduled in different ways and places, and, those that will be celebrated in Rome in particular, be powerful expressions of the way of conversion, which involves the entire People of God.

-- John Paul II,

**Address to Cardinals, Papal Household and Roman Curia
(December 21, 1999)**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation conveys and makes visible in a mysterious way these fundamental values proclaimed by the word of God. It reinserts man into the saving context of the Covenant and opens him again to the Trinitarian life, which is a dialogue of grace, a circuit of love, the gift and acceptance of the Holy Spirit...

The entire Christian community must be involved in the pastoral renewal of reconciliation. This is required by the *"ecclesial nature"* of the sacrament itself. The ecclesial community is the embrace which welcomes the repentant and forgiven sinner and, even before, creates a suitable climate for the journey back to the Father. In a reconciled and reconciling community, sinners can find the way they had lost and the help of their brethren. In the end, through the Christian community it is possible again to mark out a sound path of charity, which visibly expresses through good works the forgiveness refound, the evil redressed, the hope of being able once again to experience the Father's merciful embrace.

-- John Paul II

**"The community Dimension of Sacramental Reconciliation"
Catechesis (September 22, 1999)**

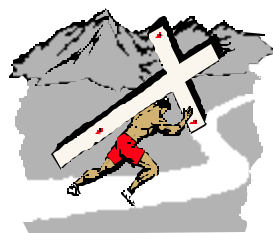
Scripture for reflection:

Isaiah 55:6-11. *"Seek the Lord while he may be found."*

Psalms 51:1-15: Prayer for conversion of heart.

Colossians 3:1-17: Exhortation to a converted life.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1427-1433, 1435, 1439 ☩



Crosses We Bear

The young man was at the end of his rope. Seeing no way out, he dropped to his knees in prayer. *"Lord, I can't go on,"* he said, *"I have too heavy a cross to bear."*

The Lord replied, *"My son, if you can't bear its weight, just place your cross inside this room. Then, open that door, and pick out any cross you wish."*

The man was filled with relief. *"Thank*

you, Lord." he sighed.

Upon entering the other door, he saw many crosses, some so large the tops were not visible. Then, he spotted a tiny cross leaning against a far wall. *"I'd like that one, Lord,"* he whispered.

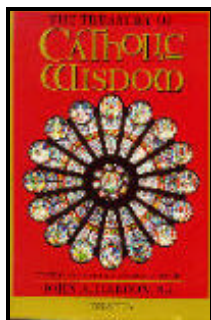
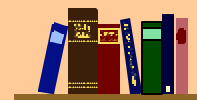
And the Lord replied, *"My son, that is the cross you just brought in."*

When life's problems seem overwhelming, it helps to look around and see what other people are coping with. ☩

**Thought
for
the
Day**



From the Library



The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom

By: Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.

The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom is a Catholic library in miniature, a one-volume microcosm of what the Church's great minds have thought and said since the apostolic age. Indeed, in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, noted theologian Fr. John A. Hardon has compiled the works of thirty-three of the greatest Catholic thinkers and writers, representing every period of the Church's passage through time, from the beginnings of Christianity to the present day. Here are men and women, bishops and priests, religious and the laity "*whose native talents were elevated by the supernatural light that God reserves for those who are most submissive to His will*". Included in this extraordinary and fascinating anthology are the works of the early saints, such as Gregory, Basil, Augustine, John Chrysostom, Patrick, Bernard, Francis, and Thomas Aquinas. Here, too, are the writings of the great reformers Ignatius, Catherine of Siena, and Teresa of Avila; the mystic John of the Cross; the practical wisdom of Francis de Sales, Louis de Montfort, and Peter Julian Eymard; and the modern-day reflections of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Francis Thompson, Therese of Lisieux, G. K. Chesterton, and Fulton J. Sheen. Fr. Hardon has selected those writings which are representative of the thought and philosophy of each contributor, and has carefully chosen excerpts which are not always the most familiar. Thus, his volume provides not only a fresh collection of the best of Catholic wisdom, but also a uniquely comprehensive work which offers enlightenment and faith for generations of readers.

Cost: \$24.95 †

AD VERITATEM

St. Thomas More Society

28202 Cabot Road
Suite 215
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677
Attn: David Belz
dbelz@kuhnbelz.com

Our Next Meeting:

WHEN: Wednesday March 15th @ 7AM-8:15AM (Breakfast)

TOPIC: *The Right to Die: Whose Right?*

SPEAKER: Vincent Fortanasce, M.D., Ph.D

PLACE: *First American Financial Headquarters (see map on page 5)*

— *Lender's Advantage Bldg., 3 First American Way, Santa Ana*

FOR INFORMATION: Anne Lanphar 714 800-3225 alanphar@firstam.com

or Dave Belz @ 949 347-0447 dbelz@kuhnbelz.com

OUR WEBSITE: www.stthomasmore.net