

Ad Veritatem

Volume 8 Issue 3

St. Thomas More Society of Orange County

MARCH 2003

Because many things
demand our attention,
More stressed that active
mortifications and set times
of prayer are needed to
keep the "heart afire"
with the love of God.

Thomas More:
Portrait of Courage
By Gerard Wegemer

MARCH MEETING:

NOON WEDNESDAY MARCH 19, 2003

DR. AUGUST (GUS) ACCETTA

**"LATEST SCIENTIFIC & MEDICAL RESEARCH
AUTHENTICATING THE SHROUD OF TURIN"**

DETAILS ON PAGE 3



WHO WE ARE

In 1966, the movie *A Man For All Seasons* inspired the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to recognize this film as the Picture of the Year. This was one of the few occasions in the history of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences where the life of a religious figure won the hearts of the motion picture industry's elite. The central figure portrayed in *Man For All Seasons* was, of course, St. Thomas More, the great lawyer, statesman, apologist, husband, father and faithful Catholic. In 2000, St. Thomas was honored as the Lawyer of the Millennium by a secular panel of historians for the British Commonwealth. Shortly thereafter, John Paul II declared St. Thomas as the Patron Saint of Statesmen.

Inspired by a homily given by Bishop Norman McFarland at the 1995 Red Mass of Orange County, 5 "fearless" members of the Orange County bar met shortly thereafter at the law offices of Rutan and Tucker in Costa Mesa. These lawyers all shared the realization that the legal practice takes a severe toll on the personal and spiritual lives of those involved in it and that many in the legal profession had become too focused on the material life with the natural consequence being the de-emphasis on their spiritual life. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the formation of a new organization for lawyers and judges in the County of Orange with its mission being to publicly support and encourage the spiritual development of its members in their Catholic faith. The group chose as its patron St. Thomas More, the greatest lawyer of his time, who was a dedicated husband and father with a deep and profound commitment to his Catholic faith, his profession and his fellow man. Thus the St. Thomas More Society of Orange County was born.

Attendance at the monthly meetings in the early years was sporadic. Our spiritual director, Fr Hugh Barbour, wisely advised us not to worry about numbers because it was more important "to be than to do or say." He encouraged the virtues of patience and perseverance. His sage advice, together with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and St. Thomas More, has led us to our current level of a fourteen member Board of Directors of lawyers and judges and a mailing list for the monthly newsletter of over 940.

The goal of the Society is to inspire and lift up the minds and hearts of the legal community of Orange County to follow the example of St. Thomas More by integrating God in every aspect of their professional and personal lives. The Society seeks to accomplish this goal through inspirational speakers at monthly meetings, this newsletter, the Red Mass, a website, an annual spiritual retreat and other events. The St. Thomas More Society also seeks to provide a haven where those who are committed to their Catholic faith as well as those who are seeking to learn more about the Church, can find fellowship and encouragement in the face of overwhelming media and cultural forces working against that pursuit.

St. Thomas More, please pray for us. †

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

David Belz at (949) 347-0447 or email to dbelz@kuhnbelz.com, or
Anne Lanphar at (714) 800-3225 or email to alanphar@firstam.com.
VISIT OUR WEBSITE at www.stthomasmore.net

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St. Michael's Abbey

AD VERITATEM EDITORS

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MARCH **MEETING**

DR. AUGUST ACCETTA

“LATEST SCIENTIFIC & MEDICAL RESEARCH AUTHENTICATING THE SHROUD OF TURIN”

WHEN: Noon
Wed. Mar. 19th

WHERE:

First American
Title Ins. Co.
2 First American
Way, Santa Ana

FOR DIRECTIONS
CALL (714) 800-3000

COST:

\$10 for lunch

Dr. August (Gus) Accetta will be the featured speaker at the monthly meeting on March 19, 2003. Dr. Accetta is a medical doctor and has participated in the scientific and medical research directly on the original Shroud of Turin. He is the director of the Shroud Center in Huntington Beach which was established in 1996. The center provides accurate information on the Shroud and promotes further scientific research of the cloth. It also houses an exhibit that includes life-size, back-lit color and black & white transparencies of the Shroud made from the 1978 photographs.

Dr. Accetta is a urologist and gynecologist specializing in female reconstructive surgery. Dr. Accetta, his wife, Therese, and their 3 children are members of St. Bonaventure parish in Huntington Beach.

For more information, please contact either David Belz at (949) 347-0447 or email to dbelz@kuhnbelz.com, or Anne Lanphar at (714) 800-3225 or alanphar@firstam.com. **EVERYONE IS WELCOME!** †

MARYWOOD CONFERENCE ON BUSINESS ETHICS & MORALITY

Wednesday, May 14 at 8am—2pm

FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 16

FIRST THURSDAY MASS

LUNCH IS PROVIDED

FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 10

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WHY DO WE NEED THE SACRAMENTS ?

FR. HUGH BARBOUR, O. FRAEM, PH.D.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAPLAIN



THE SACRAMENT
OF BAPTISM

*Nicolas Poussin
(1642)*

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 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 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. ✚

SHEEP OR SHEPHERD?

GREG WEILER, ESQ.

I was having a light-hearted discussion with an associate regarding his upcoming marriage. John is young and had a prior marriage in the Church which is now in the midst of annulment proceedings. You see, it is important to him and his new, never married, fiancé that theirs be a “Catholic” marriage. Unfortunately, their marriage plans and the timing of the annulment adjudication do not coincide. John likes to ridicule the whole process of annulment and formal Church procedures. The thought that the prior marriage may not be annulled at all, has never apparently crossed John's mind.

The point of this Article is not, however, the shallow understanding of our Faith demonstrated by this young man. Ignorance of the Faith, the Church and of Jesus Himself, is all too common, if not the norm.

What struck me during our conversation about this young man's marriage plans was something more basic. When I kidded this young lawyer about his cynical attitude about the annulment process and Our Blessed Lord's plan for couples in marriage, I said “I guess I'm just a sheep.” He responded derisively “You are a sheep.”

I paused, a long thoughtful, grateful pause and said, “You know, I am a sheep, and it's not so important that I'm a sheep, as who my shepherd is.”

I concluded by noting that “It is far easier to be a sheep following a loving shepherd, and much more peaceful than finding my own way.”

Dismissed with a twenty-something shake of the head, the young brilliant attorney left to pursue “his” plans.

I was left, not with pity for him nor a defensiveness for the Church, but with an incredible joy.

“It's not so much that I'm a sheep, it's who my shepherd is.”

One person's cynicism about the Church reminded me, clarified for me, the Good News. Jesus is my shepherd. Jesus is my shepherd-whom should I fear? What circumstance is unbearable? What decision should I fret about? What uncertainty in my life can deprive me of my peace and joy?

Unfortunately, John the young lawyer is not alone. All too often I forget who the shepherd is and who the sheep is (Okay, Greg, one more time: “Creator;” “Creation”). I keep shepherding when I should be “ba ba baaing” along. How many times have I been grabbing the staff from our Blessed Lord and steering off to the pastures I think are best.

How many times must I wander off, insisting I know the better way, the best pastures for me. But those strong feet of the Shepherd always follow after the 1 in 99 (the Hound of Heaven again). Why don't I get it? The beautiful consistent and crystalline message of Jesus is He is the good shepherd. To follow Him brings peace and eternal life. To follow Him and die to ourselves will bring us everything.

Logically I should simply trust, simply surrender to the divine shepherd. But alas the shackles of slavish selfishness are not easily broken. From the depths of Hell and all too often from my own nature the cry “I shall not serve,” “I shall not follow” comes forth.



**CHRIST THE
GOOD SHEPHERD**

*Bartolome Murillo
(1660)*

Sheep or Shepherd (Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5) *Sheep or Shepherd*

Sin, that most consistent and annoying reality keeps intruding. My pride screams against the illogic of sin, but I sin anyway. My pride insists that I should not sin. After all, I have a pretty good prayer life, I love God ostensibly with all my heart, I have a deep devotion to our Blessed Mother, I attend Mass all the time, I even partake of Jesus in the Eucharist often. “Aren’t these things, these realities enough to make me a saint?”

“I’M A GOOD CATHOLIC. WHY CAN’T I BE THE SHEPHERD?”

The reality of my “sheepdom” (oh, a new word!) so often escapes me. (If you prefer a more humane metaphor, think of St. Therese of Lisieux’s spiritual childhood.) We lawyers, more than most, cannot accept our “sheepdom.” It often seems that even faithful orthodox Catholics often mistake our desire for sanctity, holiness, with our real desire to be the Shepherd. It seems to me that real sanctity is our joyful acceptance of our “sheepdom” and not delude ourselves into thinking that we can spiritually muscle our way to Heaven. The beautiful truth is sheep need a shepherd and we have the best.

Whether we like it or not, we are sheep with the most loving merciful and glorious of shepherds. The sooner we realize that no matter how smart we are, no matter what our title, no matter what our billing rates, no matter how much money/property we have piled up, we are still sheep.

Once we understand the “sheep versus shepherd” distinction we can start the real business of life, getting to intimately know the Shepard and the joy of full surrender to Him.* †

*

“The Joy of Full Surrender” a spiritual classic by Jean Pierre De Caussade.



PRAYER PETITIONS



*Heavenly Father,
I offer you this day
all that I shall think
or do or say,
uniting it with
what was done
by Jesus Christ,
your only Son. Amen*

We all need prayers—at some times more than others. If you have a special need for prayer, please let us know so we can join in prayer for each other. Leave a message on Anne Lanphar’s voicemail (714) 800-3225, or email your request to alanphar@firstam.com

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- ✠ Lieutenant Seth Wolcott & his family.
- ✠ All members of the US Armed Forces and their families.
- ✠ Fr. Matt Munoz (special intention).
- ✠ Ryan McEachon (special intention).
- ✠ Mary Erickson (personal intention).
- ✠ For employment for John Thompson.
- ✠ Selma Mann’s family (2 medical conditions).
- ✠ Patricia Knefel (Deborah’s sister) who is recovering from a very serious illness.
- ✠ Cindie Burnes, a young mother recovering from chemotherapy.
- ✠ Michael Shonafelt (special intention).
- ✠ John Flynn & his wife (serious illness).
- ✠ Ron Gable (special intention). †

THE CROSS COMES FIRST

ROGER FIOLA

We attended midnight Mass at San Juan Capistrano, our parish, this last Christmas. I had not been to a midnight Mass in years and was expecting to be fighting off drowsiness (staying up past eleven o'clock is more of a challenge these days). But as the choir and the small ensemble of instruments began to make music, I felt more invigorated than tired. And when we sang the entrance hymn, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," with the full power of the choir and the instruments behind us, I became *enthusiastic* in the archaic sense of the word: "God was filling me up."

I waited to see the procession of the priest, who usually carries the Christ child statue for the manger in the crèche at midnight mass. But rather than the "Baby Jesus," I saw first the golden cross being held by an altar server rising above the heads of the standing congregation.

And my enthusiasm turned to sadness. It was the reminder that even in joy there is the beginning of suffering. The beginning of life carries the promise of death and that the End was there for Jesus – even at His birth.

We cannot escape the Cross. It is part of our common human destiny. And it seems we spend so much time and resources trying to escape it: to soften its impact on our lives. But it is there. We cannot simply "pass on it;" it is part of being human. Earth was never meant to be paradise. As it is, earth is not the Kingdom Jesus promises and it is certainly not heaven. Yet, in our Western culture, we spend our lives trying to make it just that – heaven on earth. It is a juvenile approach to human life. It is an overreaction to the hard lives lived by our ancestors. And they lived very hard lives compared to us. They could not escape the childhood deaths of their children, wrestling with the forces of nature to survive, and the heartache of injustice everywhere. Throughout most of human history until very recently in West, we felt like "strangers in a strange land" and God was our only guiding light.

Now with the technological comforts of the twenty-first century, the wealth that we possess relative to that of our ancestors, it is hard to believe that all problems of human existence cannot be solved by humankind – so we have no need of God. Heaven came too easily and if heaven is given too easily then the people forget about God: the lesson of the Garden of Eden. So in our comfort, we remain juvenile in our approach to life. Somehow we feel entitled to all this – like Adam and Eve felt entitled to eat the forbidden fruit. So we forget the cross – and some children today do not know there is even such a thing as a cross. We put blinders on them from the beginning and, thus, unwittingly handicap them.

"Putting blinders on" makes the cross so much harder to bear when life presents us with it. And it will present us with it eventually. Today when suffering enters our lives it is tougher for those who have no knowledge of the cross. It is hard to believe that "God would do these rotten things to us." *How dare He interrupt my godless dream of paradise!*

We can tell when we are being juvenile about life when we cast around to find someone to blame for our misfortunes. The rise in the rate of civil litigation in this

The Cross Comes First (Continued on page 8)



CHRIST OF ST JOHN
OF THE CROSS

Salvador Dali
(1951)

(Continued from page 7) ***The Cross Comes First***

country directly corresponds to this juvenile reaction to our dream of paradise being interrupted. Someone else has to be to blame. It is as if we are Peter Pan defiantly denying ourselves maturity and responsibility for our place in the human world. “We’ll never grow up!”

But we will. And we will die – just like everyone before us who gave us life. The Cross comes first.

But with the knowledge and the acceptance of the Cross, we dismiss our unrealistic approach to life and come to learn about the real treasure: the promise of Resurrection. Most of the festivals celebrating important Christian truths (specifically, Christmas and Easter) have become so secularized that they are robbed of any real potential to transform the individual. And that is what they are meant to do. In the days of preliterate Christianity, people learned through the festivals of the liturgical year the great mystery of Christ’s incarnation, His saving mission, His acceptance of the Cross, His victory over death in the Resurrection, His gift of the Holy Spirit and His promise to return to us. The festivals throughout the year took the faithful through the process of Redemption, which really means transformation, over and over again – every year of their human existence. The liturgical year was Redemptive Life in miniature. It engaged and taught us on many different levels on consciousness. It helped us to successfully deal with our strangeness in the strange land.



THE CRUCIFIXION

El Greco
(1596)

But this ability for the Gospel message, for the life of Jesus to transform us has been all but lost in contemporary society. And America remains one of the more “Christian” nations in the West! In effect, we face, as Christians, the greatest challenge to our faith since the Roman persecutions in the early centuries. The tolerance of governments for the free practice of religion is a kindlier face than that of the Roman persecutors – but the effect is more devastating. The loss of our belief in the ability of Jesus to redeem us coupled with the rise of the Techno-God that rules our hearts these days, will lead us to the brink of despair just like the times of forgetfulness in the history of Israel.

We cannot expect Resurrection without the Cross. We cannot receive without the giving over of ourselves. There must be surrender to God or we eat the forbidden fruit one more time. We cannot be God. Techno-God, the miracle of modern technology, cannot be God. Only God can be God. We forget this so often – so many times a day that we need to see the Cross. We need to be reminded that “The Cross Comes First” - before the transformation of Redemption. It has to. There is no other way. We are still strangers in a strange land.

But in remembering the Cross, we can celebrate the coming of the Christ child as it should be celebrated – with the full knowledge of the great sacrifice and sacrament of His Incarnation. Then we see the print of His love on our lives in a new way. Techno-God is merely another gift. Our good fortunes are just another gift. Our setbacks and losses are transformed for us in a new way. We understand them now to be the beginnings of God showing us another way for us to journey on this long, joyous, brief, sad, loving road back to Him.

Christmas is the celebration of the Incarnation. God leading us home to Him

The Cross Comes First (Continued on page 10)

POPE JOHN PAUL II: A WARNING REGARDING NEW AGE IDEOLOGY

The Vatican has released a long-awaited document on New Age ideology, putting Christians on guard against the “cultural currents” created by New Age theories.

In a 100-page document, released by the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue, was introduced to the media at a press conference in Rome. Cardinal Paul Poupard, the president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, chaired the event. He was accompanied by Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, the president of the Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue. The document is entitled: *“Jesus Christ, The Bearer of Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the ‘New Age.’”* The full text of the Vatican document is available on the web site of the Holy See, at:

www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html.

In explaining the effort, Cardinal Poupard said that the New Age movement “is one of the most urgent challenges for the Christian faith.” He added that the challenge occurs on both the religious and cultural levels, and because New Age thought has infected much popular thinking, it is sometimes difficult to discern which trends in contemporary thought has become incompatible with Christian faith.

“The rise of New Age ideology,” the cardinal continued, is “the symptom of a culture in deep crisis.” He said that many people today are searching for meaning in life, and for a grasp of the transcendent. However, he said, the New Age theory provides only “the wrong answer” to the questions of contemporary life. New Age theory first made its appearance late in the 19th century, and grew in popularity slowly, among a small coterie of esoteric thinkers and mystics in Europe and America, until its popularity boomed amid the cultural revolution of the 1970s. In its pure form, the New Age ideology begins with the belief that the “old age”-- the Age of Pisces, or the Christian era -- is drawing to a close, and the Age of Aquarius is beginning. That belief, the Vatican document points out, is clearly incompatible with Christian faith.

Cardinal Poupard called attention to another error in the New Age approach: “The growing conviction that there is a certain basic truth, a kernel of truth in the heart of every religious experience has led to the idea that one can and must gather all characteristic elements of the diverse religions to arrive at a universal form of religion.” The new Vatican document emphasizes that religious insights are not of equal value, and that Jesus Christ is the sole author of salvation for mankind. The influence of New Age theory, the Vatican notes with concern, has become obvious within the Catholic Church, particularly in retreat houses and religious houses of formation. The document calls attention to theories about the psychological affirmation of the individual, and the search for an “alternative vision” of human potential, as signs of danger.

New Age theory, the lengthy Vatican document observes, poses clear challenges not only for religion, but also for the future of medicine, philosophy, environmental regulation, and the arts. The document provides a thorough examination of the trends that have grown out of New Age ideology, and examines in particular their implications for Christian doctrine.

Archbishop Fitzgerald said that the new document should be recognized as the first effort to engage in dialogue with New Age theories. He said that Christians should recognize the “true religious sense” in many people who are influenced by the ideo-



**FROM
PETER'S
SUCCESSOR,
POPE
JOHN
PAUL
II**



Reprinted from
Catholic World News
www.cwnnews.com

Warning Regarding New Age Ideology (Continued on page 16)



CRUCIFIX
Michelangelo
(1492)

(Continued from page 8) ***The Cross Comes First***

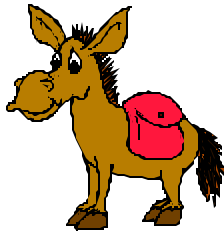
in the person of Jesus. Even Jesus had to suffer when he became one of us. Like us, He was also a stranger in a strange land. You cannot be human, otherwise. So, the true celebration is really that the Cross redeems us – not the Incarnation, not the Resurrection. The Cross claims us as His - because the Shepherd would die for his flock. Once we are His, nothing on earth or in heaven can prevail against us, nothing can destroy us. The Cross reminds us, in festival and in mourning, to whom we truly belong. And in that ancient reminder we, once again, are given “hope that surpasses all understanding.” The Good News is: God will never stop trying to give us the gift of that hope. Amen. ✚

Ad Risum Vertere Veritatem* **Latin for “To turn truth into laughter”*



A DEAD JACKASS

O'Malley rose from his bed. It was a fine spring day in his new Washington D.C. parish. He walked to the window of his bedroom to get a deep breath of the beautiful day outside. He then noticed there was a jackass lying dead in the middle on his front lawn. He promptly called the US Senate for assistance.



The conversation went like this: “Good morning. This is Senator Daschle. How might I help you?”

“And the best of the day te yerself. This is Father O'Malley at St. Brigid's. There's a jackass lying dead in me front lawn. Would ye be so kind as to send a couple o' yer lads to take care of the matter?”

Senator Daschle, considering himself to be quite a wit, replied with a smirk, “Well now, Father, it was always my impression that you people took care of last rites!”

There was dead silence on the line for a long moment.

Father O'Malley then replied: “Aye, that's certainly true, but we are also obliged to notify the next of kin.” ✚

FIRST THURSDAY MASS AT THE BUSCH FIRM

**THE BUSCH FIRM IS HOSTING FIRST THURSDAY
MASS IN THEIR PRIVATE CHAPEL**

CELEBRANT: FATHER JOHN HILTZ

LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED AT NO COST.

LOCATION: 2532 DUPONT AVE, IRVINE

TIME: NOON RSVP NOT REQUIRED

EVERYONE IS WELCOME! ✚



NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCES

MICHAEL SHONAFELT, ESQ.

If scientific evidence for the immortality of the human soul could ever be established, it would likely come from the rigorous study of what has become an indisputable phenomenon: the near death experience, or "NDE." While the spiritual and scientific realms have always been seen to exist on either side of an impassible chasm, new research into the NDE is presenting a new and unprecedented nexus between faith and science.

Research into NDEs extends back to at least 1926, when Sir William Barrett, a professor of Physics at the Royal College of Science in Dublin, published a book called *Deathbed Visions*. The work was prompted by a strange experience recounted by the Professor's wife, an obstetrical surgeon. She was called to deliver the child of a woman named Doris, who was dying of a hemorrhage. As Doris lay dying, she kept looking eagerly toward a certain part of the room. All the while "a radiant smile illuminat[ed] her whole countenance." When asked what she saw, Doris responded, "Lovely brightness - wonderful beings." When the newly delivered baby was brought for her to see, Doris looked with interest, but the beauty of the vision apparently was too powerful, and overwhelmed even her maternal instinct to stay for her baby's sake. "I can't - I can't stay," Doris said, "if you could see what I do, you would know I can't stay." If the story were not compelling enough, an even more remarkable phenomenon followed. Doris, with a quizzical look on her face, mentioned that she also saw her sister Vida, standing with her deceased father. Vida had died only three weeks earlier, but Doris could not have known, as her death was kept a secret from her, due to her extremely delicate condition. The power of his wife's account led Barrett to embark on a systematic, scientific study of numerous such visions. His ultimate conclusion was that there was something objective about the visions, which could not be dismissed as a mere hallucination.

Research on NDEs has increased in more recent times as modern medical technology becomes more efficient at resuscitating the clinically dead. Vast amounts of data exist regarding the NDE phenomenon, and the experience is far too widespread for anyone to seriously dismiss it. A scientific review of such data has yielded several characteristics common to a large number of NDEs:

- (1) Perceptions of a divine presence from God or God-like figure;
- (2) Out of body experiences such as being able to see one's own body or being resuscitated by doctors;
- (3) A sense of being dead or killed;
- (4) A feeling of peace and painlessness;
- (5) Having a tunnel experience of feeling trapped or moving through a narrow passage way;
- (6) Being able to see one's life in panoramic review; and
- (7) Meeting with deceased persons.

These experiences comport with Catholic philosophical and theological conceptions of the immateriality of the human soul and its persistence beyond the grave. But the incontrovertible data gleaned from hundreds of interviews of resuscitated subjects presents a bold challenge to scientific and materialistic notions of the human organism.

Near Death Experiences (Continued on page 12)

TRUTH OR MYTH?



THE ECSTASY OF
ST PAUL

Johann Liss
(Date Unknown)

(Continued from page 11) *Near Death Experiences*

The challenge arises by virtue of the scientific method itself, which is limited to quantifiable, and therefore necessarily material, reality. If the mind actually survives the death of the body, we are dealing with a quintessentially *immaterial* phenomenon, and science will be left devoid of satisfactory explanations.

Yet, many in the scientific community have already presented a purely physiological explanation for many of the phenomena experienced by those resuscitated from clinical death. The primary skeptical explanation is “cerebral anoxia,” a condition arising from a lack of oxygen to the brain. Anoxia occurs when the heart stops beating, and has been found to produce neurologically-based experiences similar to those recounted by NDE patients.

But the anoxia theory is now being called into serious question. On December 15, 2001, the highly respected international medical journal, *The Lancet*, published a 13-year, peer-reviewed study of NDEs observed in 10 different Dutch hospitals. The study casts doubt on the anoxia theory, in the words of its chief investigator, cardiologist Pim van Lommel, MD:

Our results show that medical factors cannot account for the occurrence of NDE. All patients had a cardiac arrest, and were clinically dead with unconsciousness resulting from insufficient blood supply to the brain. In those circumstances, the EEG (a measure of brain electrical activity) becomes flat, and if CPR is not started within 5-10 minutes, irreparable damage is done to the brain and the patient will die. According to the theory that NDE is caused by anoxia, all patients in our study should have had an NDE, but only 18% reported having an NDE...

Instead the NDErs, despite the complete absence of electrical activity in the brain and loss of brainstem function, reported a clear consciousness, in which cognitive functioning, emotion, sense of identity, or memory from early childhood occurred, as well as perceptions from a position out and above their “dead” body.

The *Lancet* study presents a scientific case of consciousness existing outside of the brain, when the brain itself appears to be dead. With respect to this astounding evidence, Dr. van Lommel wrote:

How could a clear consciousness outside one's body be experienced at the moment that the brain no longer functions during a period of clinical death with flat EEG? . . . Furthermore, blind people have described veridical perception during out-of-body experiences at the time of this experience. NDE pushes at the limits of medical ideas about the range of human consciousness and the mind-brain relation.

Another recent study, conducted by the University of Southampton, arrived at the same conclusions as *The Lancet*. For the University of Southampton study, a team of scientists spent a year studying patients in the city's General Hospital. Each had been resuscitated from cardiac arrest and each was, for varying lengths of time, clinically dead with no pulse, no respiration and fixed dilated pupils. Independent EEG studies confirmed that the brain's electrical activity, and hence brain function, ceases at that time. But seven out of 63 (11 per cent) of the Southampton patients who survived their cardiac arrest recalled emotions and visions during unconsciousness. They recalled feelings of peace and joy, a sense of time speeding up, heightened senses, lost awareness of body, seeing a bright light, entering another world, encountering a mystical being or deceased relative and coming to a point of no return.

Dr Sam Parnia, a co-author of the study, noted, “During cardiac arrest brainstem activity is rapidly lost. It should not be able to sustain such lucid processes or allow the formation of lasting memories.” Dr. Parnia went on to note, “We need a large, definitive study to tell us whether the mind is produced by the brain or whether it is a separate entity. If it is the latter this will have almost unimaginable implications.”

This rigorous scientific research into the basis for NDEs appears to be leading to an exciting new nexus between faith and science. It is now clear that NDEs are truth, not myth. But more astounding and remarkable still is that the NDE has catapulted science into the borderlands of spirit and, ultimately, the possibility of scientific proof for the immortality of the soul. ☩

GET OUT OF THE BOAT!

I started a book **If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat**. I haven't had a whole lot of time to read, but did manage to get in a couple of chapters. In one chapter the author talks about failure. He writes: "Failure is not an event, but rather a judgment about an event. Failure is not something that happens to us or a label we attach to things. It is a way we think about things."

Before Jonas Salk developed a vaccine for polio that finally worked, he tried two hundred unsuccessful ones. Somebody asked him, "How did it feel to fail two hundred times?"

"I never failed two hundred times in my life," Salk replied. "I was taught not to use the word 'failure.' I just discovered two hundred ways how not to vaccinate for polio."

He then goes on to say: Somebody once asked Winston Churchill what most prepared him to risk political suicide by speaking out against Hitler during the years of appeasement in the mid-1930's, then to lead Great Britain against Nazi Germany. Churchill said it was the time he had to repeat a grade in elementary school.

"You mean you failed a year in grade school?" he was asked.

"I never failed anything in my life. I was given a second opportunity to get it right."

He then goes on to talk about the apostle Peter and did he fail when he began to sink beneath the waves: Well, I suppose in a way he did. His faith wasn't strong enough. His doubts were stronger. "He saw the wind." He took his eyes off of where they should have been. He sank. He failed.

But (he goes on to add) here is what I think. I think there were eleven bigger failures sitting in the boat. They failed quietly. They failed privately. Their failure went unnoticed, unobserved, uncriticized. Only Peter knew the shame of public failure.

But only Peter knew two other things as well. Only Peter knew the glory of walking on the water.....

And only Peter knew the glory of being lifted up by Jesus in a moment of desperate need.....He (Peter) had a shared moment, a shared connection, a shared trust in Jesus that none of the others had.

They couldn't, because they didn't even get out of the boat. The worst failure is not to sink in the waves. *The worst failure is to never get out of the boat.*

The author goes on to say that every time you resist God's voice and stay "comfortable" (stay inside your boat), the voice gets a little quieter in you, until at last you don't hear His voice at all. ✚



**THOUGHT
FOR
THE
DAY**



SIMPLE TRUTHS



Fulton J. Sheen

"To explore the Truth in all its complexity there must come moments when we confess ignorance, when we frankly admit that we were mistaken or bigoted, or prejudiced. These admissions are painful, but they actually enrich character just as much as all approximations to falsehood forfeit it." ✚

**THE
WRITINGS
OF
THOMAS
MORE**



MORE ON A GODLY MEDITATION

Written by St. Thomas More, Knight, while he was a prisoner in the Tower of London, in the year of our Lord, 1534.

*Give me thy grace, good Lord,
To set the world at nought;
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;
Little and little utterly to cast off the world,
And rid my mind of all the business thereof;
Not to long to hear of any worldly things,
But that the hearing of worldly fantasies may be to me displeasing;
Gladly to be thinking of God;
Piteously to call for his help;
To lean unto the comfort of God;
Busily to labour to love Him;
To know mine own vility and wretchedness;
To humble and meeken myself under the mighty hand of God;
To bewail my sins passed;
For the purging of them, patiently to suffer adversity;
Gladly to bear my purgatory here;
To be joyful of tribulations;
To walk the narrow way that leadeth to life;
To bear the cross with Christ;
To have the last thing in remembrance;
To have ever afore mine eye my death that is ever at hand;
To make death no stranger to me;
To foresee and consider the everlasting fire of hell;
To pray for pardon before the judge come;
To have continually in mind the passion that Christ suffered for me;
For his benefits uncessantly to give him thanks;
To buy the time again that I before have lost;
To abstain from vain confabulations;
To eschew light foolish mirth and gladness;
Recreations not necessary to cut off;
Of worldly substance, friends, liberty, life and all, to set the loss at right
nought, for the winning of Christ;
To think my most enemies my best friends;
For the brethren of Joseph could never have done him so much good with
their love and favour as they did him with their malice and hatred.
These minds are more to be desired of every man, than all the treasure of
all the princes and kings, Christian and heathen, were it gathered and laid
together all upon one heap.*

From More's Prayers and Meditations †

LUKE 21: 34-36

³⁴But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; ³⁵for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. ³⁶But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man.



SCRIPTURAL CORNER

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

Comment from the Navarre Bible:*

At the end of his discourse Jesus emphasizes that every Christian needs to be vigilant: we do not know the day nor the hour in which he will ask us to render an account of our lives. Therefore, we must at all times be trying to do God's will, so that death, whenever it comes, will find us ready. For those who act in this way, sudden death never takes them by surprise. As St Paul recommends: "You are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief." (1 Thess 5:4) Vigilance consists in making a constant effort not to be attached to the things of this world (the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life: cf. John 2:16) and in being assiduous in prayer, which keeps us close to God. If we live in this way, the day we die will be a day of joy and not of terror, for with God's help our vigilance will mean that our souls are ready to receive the visit of the Lord, they are in a state of grace: in meeting Christ we will not be meeting a judge who will find us guilty; instead he will embrace us and lead us into the house of his Father to remain there forever. "Does your soul not burn with the desire to make your Father-God happy when he has to judge you?" (Bl. J. Escriva. The Way. 746). †

DO IT FOR HIM

*"Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me."
Matthew 25:40*

St. Thomas More was a scholar not only of English law but also the law of God. Although he was Chancellor of England and one of the most successful lawyers in England, More realized that the description of the last judgment set forth in Matthew 25: 31-46 would apply to him too. He took the admonitions of Christ seriously practicing humility and providing generously for the poor. During the famine of 1528, More fed over 100 people a day at his own home in Chelsea.

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A LITTLE THING WHEN YOU TRAVEL

IF YOU DO NOT USE THE SOAP, SHAMPOO OR OTHER INCIDENTALS PROVIDED IN THE HOTEL, PLEASE BRING THEM TO A ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY MEETING OR CONTACT ANNE LANPHAR* TO MAKE OTHER ARRANGMENTS. THEY WILL BE DELIVERED TO A HOMELESS SHELTER OR HOME FOR UNWED MOTHERS.

THESE SMALL ITEMS MEAN A LOT TO THOSE WHO HAVE LITTLE. †



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(Continued from page 9) **Warning Regarding New Age Ideology**

logical trends, and prepare to offer them a more complete and authentically Christian response to their questions and their needs.

The Vatican document makes the observation that the internet has proven to be a highly efficient carrier of New Age theory. Often the theory is spread by confusing means, the document warns: "not all that is labeled 'Christian' or 'Catholic' can be trusted to reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church."

In an effort to help Christians recognize the influence of New Age thinking, the text includes a glossary of terms that appear frequently in the ideology, such as "evolution," "holism," "reincarnation," and "New Age music."



Coming Next May 14th - The Inaugural
Marywood Conference
on Business Ethics and Morality



Michael Novak noted author of *Business as a Calling*, lecturer and U.S. Ambassador will be the keynote speaker at the first **Marywood Conference on Business Ethics and Morality**, a gathering of Orange County business and community leaders who will examine issues of business ethics and morality and the role of Catholic schools in forming our future leaders and their mentors on **May 14, 2003, from 8AM to 2PM.**

Reservations for tickets to what will surely be a sellout event at Marywood can be made by calling Pat Jackson at The Diocese of Orange (714) 282-3020. Individual **tickets** are \$100. each and are **tax deductible**. Business firms, organizations and parishes are encouraged to **reserve tables** of ten at \$1,000.

Proceeds from this event will go to the URBAN SCHOOL ASSISTANCE PROJECT and benefit financially needy schools and kids within the Diocese.

Appearing on the program with Mr. Novak will be:

- **Fr. Robert J. Spitzer S.J. PhD** President of Gonzaga University, National Chaplain for Legatus and author of *Spirit of Leadership* and *Ethical Leadership at the Competitive Edge*.
- **Mr. Lance Izumi J.D.** Director at the Pacific Research Institute and author of studies on school choice and the achievements of Catholic Schools in urban school communities.
- **Dr. George Saint-Laurent**, Professor Emeritus of Comparative Religion at CSU Fullerton

And ...

Bishop **Tod D. Brown** will be presenting a special award for **EXEMPLARY ETHICAL BEHAVIOR IN BUSINESS** to Mr. Carl Karcher and Mr. Peter Muth.

GET THIS DATE ON YOUR CALENDAR and Make Reservations NOW!

May 14, 2003

8AM Hospitality, 9:15 Program, Noon Luncheon, Mr. Novak speaks

Hosted by The Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange and the Offices of Development and Catholic Schools.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.rcbo.org/education/schools/conference.htm>

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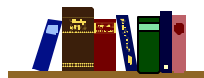
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WELCOME HOME! STORIES OF FALLEN-AWAY CATHOLICS WHO CAME BACK

BY FR. JOHN CORAPI, JESSE ROMERO, RICK STROM & OTHERS

FROM THE LIBRARY



Here are the compelling stories of eleven “reverters”, Catholics who fell away from the Church and eventually came back home. Some of the people are well-known, such as Fr. Corapi. Jesse Romero, and Rick Strom, while others are only known in their smaller circles. Nevertheless, each person’s story of why he left the Catholic Church and why he returned is a unique and moving tale of God’s mercy, love and grace.

There is one common denominator, though, among the writers of Coming Home! To paraphrase Archbishop Fulton Sheen, few hate the Catholic Church for what she teaches, but millions hate her for what they think she teaches. The defining moment of illuminating grace almost always came when our storytellers began to examine Catholic teaching for *themselves*.

“I have no doubt that those who read Coming Home! will take from these intriguing conversion stories a renewed spirit of confidence and devotion. In this book they will also find an informative source of Catholic apologetics that will especially attract those who have shared similar life experiences in their sincere search for truth and reconciliation with the Catholic Church of their youth, which is indeed the Covenant Family of God where the One who is Truth Itself abides forever.” —Fr Bill Casey, C.P.M.

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