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ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

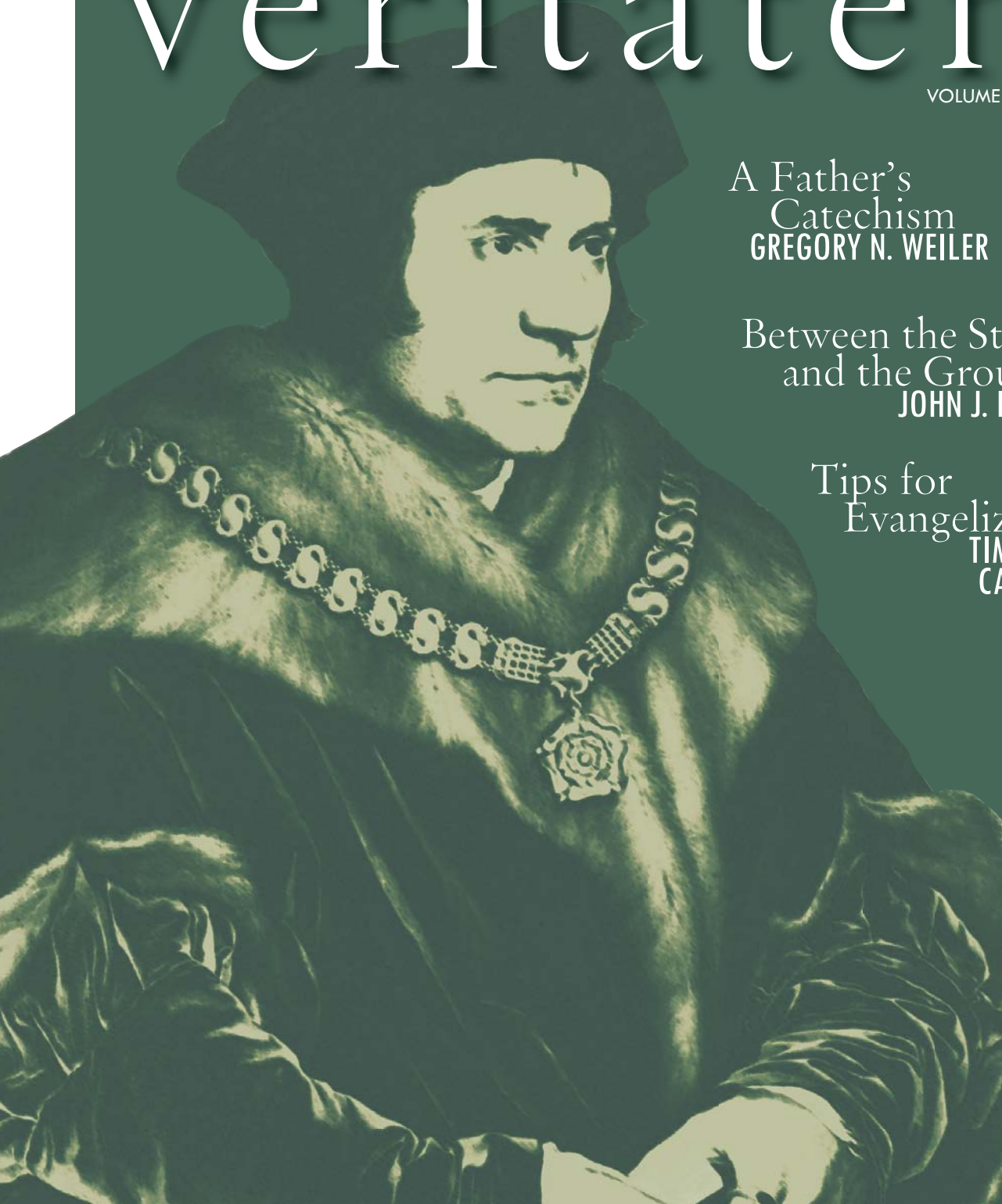
MARCH 2012

VOLUME 17 ISSUE 3

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A DAD'S SEND OFF TO HIS SON GOING TO COLLEGE

GREGORY N. WEILER

Dearest Michael,
It has been an incredibly short 18 years and now you are off to USD. Wow—you're the only one of the kids who says they may want to be a lawyer. You would make a great one!



From a Dad's perspective it is interesting how my feelings vary each time I sit down to write to one of you guys going off to college. Laura was my first born, the first to crack the heart of a young, self-centered man. Then Greg, my first born son, the Sesame Street guy, my strong-willed child whom I drug on various and sundry outdoor activities, probably before he was ready. Then, Thomas the ultimate do gooder who exposed me to Notre Dame and all its good stuff.

And then there is you. Quieter than the others but strong, brilliant and sensitive. You're probably the most like me of the bunch, but squashed by three ahead of you. However, much more important than us being alike is your spirituality. "Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?" These questions are not merely hypothetical with you, but resonate in your heart. I'm glad.

Now you are off to the University of San Diego, a great Catholic university. You have the opportunity to earn a wonderful Catholic education. Go for it and feast on the opportunity! I have no doubt that you will.

Like Laura, Greg and Thomas, I wanted you to know some of the dreams that Mom and I have for you. Not Bill Gates, rock-star type dreams, but those of a different, loftier sort. So dearest Michael, here's my best shot at wisdom in a few paragraphs.

You've got a Heavenly Father who loves you infinitely more than I do (which is a whole bunch). He made you, knows you, and is always there for you. No matter what you do; no matter how many times you fall; no matter what happens, if you just turn to Him, He will put a ring on your finger, give you His finest robe and kill the fatted calf. You

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IDEALS OF ST. THOMAS MORE

The legal profession is a high calling with corresponding responsibilities to society. The principal objective of every lawyer is to promote and seek justice. Catholic Lawyers pursue the truth in both their spiritual and professional lives. The duty of a Catholic lawyer is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, His Church and its teachings at all times despite the personal consequences.

THE OBJECTIVES OF STMS

- encouraging its members to live a Christian life and apply the principles and ideals exemplified by St. Thomas More in their lives and encourage same in the legal profession.
- promoting and foster high ethical principals in the legal profession generally and, in particular, in the community of Catholic lawyers.
- assisting in the spiritual growth of its members.
- encouraging interfaith understanding and brotherhood.
- sponsoring the annual Red Mass for

elected and appointed officials and members of the legal profession.

MEMBERSHIP IN STMS

Each member of the Society is committed to:

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

LAWYER'S PRAYER

Give me the grace, Good Lord, to set the world at naught; to set my mind fast upon thee and not to hang upon the blast of men's mouths; to be content to be solitary; not to long for worldly company but utterly to cast off the world and rid my mind of the business thereof.
- ST. THOMAS MORE

EDITOR@STTHOMASMORE.NET

BETWEEN THE STIRRUP AND THE GROUND

JOHN J. FLYNN III

Lent is a time for reflection on conversion, and on the unaccountable mercy of God, unconstrained by any human ideas of justice, proportion, or economy. We use the words “sin” and “forgiveness” so freely that we can lose our grip on what really is at stake, and the price paid to overcome the power of death itself. It can be terrifying to imagine that the impact of sin is so great that the price could be paid only if God himself made the purchase by his suffering and death. How is it then that we are not perpetually shocked by the “appalling strangeness of the mercy of God,” to use Graham Greene’s phrase?

Greene and Evelyn Waugh, both Catholic converts, were two of the great novelists of the 20th century, both preoccupied as writers with the extraordinary interplay of sin and grace, as if two sides of a coin. We need, especially at Lent, to be shocked by divine mercy, and sometimes only the gifts of the artist can provide the needed impulse.

Waugh’s masterpiece was *Brideshead Revisited*, a brilliantly rendered study of the deeply mysterious workings of grace, and its power to pierce the heart even where no heart seems any longer to be beating.

The *Brideshead* protagonist is a young man named Charles Ryder. As of the scene described below, he has attached himself to the Marchmains, who live in the ancestral home of Brideshead. The family is Catholic. Charles Ryder is an atheist, in love with Julia Marchmain, who has left her husband. Lord Marchmain, who long ago left the family to live with his mistress in Italy, has returned to Brideshead to die. The family now is embroiled in a debate about whether to summon a priest as Marchmain’s death draws near. Here is Waugh’s description of Marchmain’s last hours, as told by Charles Ryder, who had angrily objected to the involvement of a priest:

“The priest bent over Lord Marchmain and blessed him. Julia and Cara knelt at the foot of the bed. The doctor, the nurse and I stood behind them.

‘Now,’ said the priest, ‘I know you are sorry for all the sins of your life, aren’t you? Make a sign, if you can. You’re sorry, aren’t you?’ But there was no sign. ‘Try and remember your sins; tell God you are sorry. I am going to give you absolution. While I am giving it, tell God you are sorry you have offended Him.’ He began to speak in Latin. I recognized



the words *Ego te absolvo in nomine Patris . . .* and saw the priest make the sign of the cross. Then I knelt, too, and prayed: ‘O God, if there is a God, forgive him his sins, if there is such a thing as sin,’ and the man on the bed opened his eyes and gave a sigh, the sort of sigh I had imagined people made at the moment of death, but his eyes moved so that we knew there was still life in him.

I suddenly felt the longing for a sign, if only of courtesy, if only for the sake of the woman I loved, who knelt in front of me, praying, I knew, for a sign. It seemed so small a thing that was asked, the bare acknowledgment of a present, a nod in the crowd. All over the world people were on their knees before innumerable crosses, and here the drama was being played again by two men-by one man, rather, and he nearer death than life; the universal drama in which there is only one actor.

The priest took the little silver box from his pocket and spoke again in Latin, touching the dying man with an oily wad; he finished what he had to do, put away the box and gave the final blessing. Suddenly Lord Marchmain moved his hand to his forehead; I thought he had felt the touch of the chrism and was wiping it away. ‘O God,’ I prayed, ‘don’t let him do that.’ But there was no need for fear; the hand moved slowly down his breast, then to his shoulder, and Lord Marchmain made the sign of the cross. Then I knew that the sign I had asked for was not a little thing, not a passing nod of recognition, and a phrase came back to me from my childhood of the veil of the temple being rent from top to bottom.”

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TIPS FOR EVANGELIZATION

TIMOTHY CARDINAL DOLAN

Then cardinal-designate, Timothy Cardinal Dolan of New York gave this speech Feb. 17 before the Pope and the College of Cardinals: “The Announcement of the Gospel Today, Between *Missio Ad Gentes* and the New Evangelization.”

Holy Father, Cardinal Sodano, my brothers in Christ:

Sia lodato Gesu Cristo!

It is as old as the final mandate of Jesus, “Go, teach all nations!” yet as fresh as God’s holy word proclaimed at our own Mass this morning.

I speak of the sacred duty of evangelization. It is “ever ancient, ever new.” The how of it, the when of it, the where of it, may change, but the charge remains constant, as does the message and inspiration, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.”

We gather in the *caput mundi*, evangelized by Peter and Paul themselves, in the city from where the successors of St. Peter “sent out” evangelizers to present the saving Person, message and invitation that is at the heart of evangelization: throughout Europe, to the “new world” in the “era of discovery,” to Africa and Asia in recent centuries.

We gather near the basilica where the evangelical fervor of the Church was expanded during the Second Vatican Council and near the tomb of the Blessed Pontiff who made the New Evangelization a household word.

We gather grateful for the fraternal company of a pastor who has made the challenge of the New Evangelization almost a daily message.

Yes, we gather as missionaries, as evangelizers.

We hail the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, especially found in *Lumen Gentium*, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Ad Gentes*, that refines the Church’s

understanding of her evangelical duty, defining the entire Church as missionary, that all Christians, by reason of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, are evangelizers.

Yes, the Council reaffirmed, especially in *Ad Gentes*, there are explicit missionaries, sent to lands and peoples who have never heard the very Name by which all are saved, but also that no Christian is exempt from the duty of witnessing to Jesus and offering his invitation to others in his own day-to-day life.

Thus, mission became central to the life of every local Church, to every believer. The context of mission shifted not only in a geographical sense, but in a theological sense, as mission applied not only to unbelievers, but to believers, and some thoughtful people began to wonder if such a providential expansion of the concept of evangelization unintentionally diluted the emphasis of mission *ad gentes*.

Blessed John Paul II developed this fresh understanding, speaking of evangelizing cultures, since the engagement between faith and culture supplanted the relationship between church and state dominant prior to the Council and included in this task the re-evangelizing of cultures that had once been the very engine of Gospel values.

The New Evangelization became the dare to apply the invitation of Jesus to



conversion of heart not only *ad extra*, but *ad intra*, to believers and cultures where the salt of the Gospel had lost its tang. Thus, the *missio* is not only to New Guinea, but to New York.

In *Redemptoris Missio*, 33, he elaborated upon this, noting primary evangelization—the preaching of Jesus to lands and people unaware of his saving message—the New Evangelization—the rekindling of faith in persons and cultures where it has grown lackluster—and the pastoral care of those daily living as believers.

We, of course, acknowledge that there can be no opposition between the *missio ad gentes* and the New Evangelization. It is not an “either-or,” but a “both-and” proposition. The New Evangelization generates enthusiastic missionaries; those in the apostolate of the *missio ad gentes* require themselves to be constantly evangelized anew.

Even in the New Testament, to the very generation who had the *missio ad gentes* given by the Master at his ascension still ringing in their ears, Paul had to remind them to “stir into flame” the gift of faith given them, certainly an early instance of the New Evangelization.

And, just recently, in the inspirational Synod in Africa, we heard our brothers from the very lands radiant with the fruits of the

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A FATHER'S CATECHISM

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

have the opportunity to live the feast of the prodigal son every time you fall if you will only turn to your real Father. So if you screw up so badly that you think you're beyond hope, that even your Mom and I won't understand or forgive you, you've got to know and believe that He loves you; that He'll forgive you in a nano-second (if you only ask); that His love for you is unconditional.

Your Heavenly Father only asks one thing of you, that you say yes to His love for you. Say yes.

Unlike the earth, sea and stars, He loves you enough to give you the freedom not to love Him. He lets you choose life or death. Dearest son, choose life. A simple 'yes' becomes not so simple because the question does not have a one-word, one-time answer. The "yes" to God is your life.

Our Heavenly Father leaves nothing to chance when it comes to "how to" on saying "yes." A yes is love, and it begins

and ends with His Son, Jesus. Discovering Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life is what we have been trying to help you to do, but it is ultimately up to you. Jesus is the answer to the question that is your life. So go out and find Him in scripture, the poor, the weak, the oppressed. Find His real presence in the Blessed Sacrament and through His Mother. As I've told you so often, the twin pillars that will see you through the raging storms of your life are the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to Our Blessed Mother. Some day you may appreciate why I carry those rosaries with me always and attend daily Mass.

For guys like us, it's important to recognize one absolute fact: It's not our efforts or brains that get us to Heaven. It's God's goodness, power and mercy; His grace, that is the guarantee. It's not the money we put in the bank, but the goodness of the Banker. It's not the many gifts, but the generosity of the Giver.

In other words, it's about Him, not us.

Work hard, make us proud, keep your eye on the ball and make a positive difference on the world.

Love up to the moon and the stars.

- Dad ♦

BETWEEN THE STIRRUP AND THE GROUND

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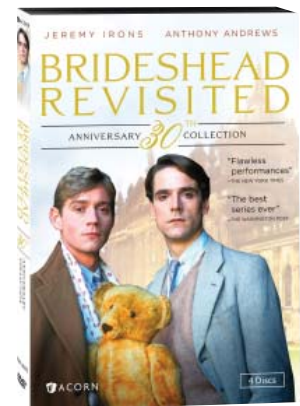
Waugh's account of the scene, considered an artistic failure by some, was a daring stroke, especially given the critical response the scene was likely to elicit. Edmund Wilson, for example, one of the great literary critics of the last century, excoriated Waugh for the scene, calling it "extravagantly absurd."

Whether or not the scene passes the test of great art, it passes the test of truth, and it seems unlikely that, in any ultimate sense, art and truth can ever be opposed. There is a sense almost of galaxies moving unnaturally as something stirs in Marchmain's breast; we are certainly to be even more surprised and moved by the sudden genuflection of Charles Ryder, the atheist previously opposed so adamantly

to even the presence of a priest. It is, to be sure, a deathbed conversion scene. So Marchmain is saved "between the stirrup and the ground," a phrase used by Greene in Brighton Rock, lifted apparently from someone's epitaph: "Between the stirrup and the ground, he mercy sought, and mercy found."

There is no rhyme or reason to the mercy of God, only grace.

And grace, to borrow from the greatest of modern saints, is everywhere. It could not be otherwise, as the gates of mercy were fully opened by a lance at Calvary. ♦



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTH	DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
March	Wed., March 21, 12:00 p.m.	Lunch meeting. Fr. Robert Spitzer, S.J., will speak on "Ten Universal Principles: A Brief Philosophy of the Life Issues."	Jilio-Ryan Hunter & Olsen 14661 Franklin, #150 Tustin, California jilioryan.com
	Sun., March 25, 8:30-11:30 a.m.	Come to help cook and serve breakfast to the homeless of the community at Isaiah House. www.occatholicworker.org	Isaiah House 316 S. Cypress Avenue Santa Ana, CA 92701 (714) 835-6304
April	Wed., April 18, 12:00 p.m.	Lunch meeting. Hon. Dave Belz will speak about St. Thomas More.	Jilio-Ryan Hunter & Olsen (same as above)
May	Wed., May 16, 12:00 p.m.	Lunch meeting.	Jilio-Ryan Hunter & Olsen (same as above)
June	Wed., June 20, 12:00 p.m.	Lunch meeting. Greg Weiler will speak on the spirituality of Abraham Lincoln.	Jilio-Ryan Hunter & Olsen (same as above)
October	Mon., Oct 1	St. Thomas More Society Orange County Annual Red Mass.	Holy Family Cathedral

MARCH MEETING

ROBERT J. SPITZER, S.J., Ph.D.

Please join us on Wednesday, March 21 from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m., as the very engaging Fr. Robert Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D. presents his new book: *Ten Universal Principles: A Brief Philosophy of the Life Issues*.

His book sets out, in a brief, yet highly-readable and lucid style, ten basic principles that must govern the reasonable person's thinking and acting about life issues. A highly-regarded philosopher, Father Spitzer provides an intelligent outline for thinking and talking about human life. This book is a powerful tool for persuasively articulating and effectively

inculturating a prolife philosophy.

Fr. Spitzer is a philosopher, educator, author and former President of Gonzaga University. He is founder and President of the Magis Institute, an organization dedicated to public education on the relationship among the disciplines of physics, philosophy, reason, and faith. He is the head of the Ethics and Performance Institute which delivers web-based ethics education to corporations and individuals. He is also President of the Spitzer Center of Ethical Leadership, which delivers similar curricula to non-profit organizations. His other books include *Healing the Culture* and *Five Pillars of the Spiritual Life*.



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TIPS FOR EVANGELIZATION

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

missio ad gentes report that those now in the second and third generation after the initial missionary zeal already stand in need of the New Evangelization.

The acclaimed American missionary and TV evangelist Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, commented, “Our Lord’s first word to his disciples was: ‘Come!’ His last word was: ‘Go!’ You can’t ‘go’ unless you’ve first ‘come’ to him.”

A towering challenge to both the *missio ad gentes* and the New Evangelization today is what we call secularism. Listen to how our Pope describes it:

“Secularization, which presents itself in cultures by imposing a world and humanity without reference to Transcendence, is invading every aspect of daily life and developing a mentality in which God is effectively absent, wholly or partially, from human life and awareness. This secularization is not only an external threat to believers, but has been manifest for some time in the heart of the Church herself. It profoundly distorts the Christian faith from within and, consequently, the lifestyle and daily behavior of believers. They live in the world and are often marked, if not conditioned, by the cultural imagery that impresses contradictory and impelling models regarding the practical denial of God: There is no longer any need for God, to think of him or to return to him. Furthermore, the prevalent hedonistic and consumeristic mindset fosters in the faithful and in pastors a tendency to superficiality and selfishness that is harmful to ecclesial life” (Benedict XVI, “Address to Pontifical Council for Culture,” 8.III.2008).

This secularization calls for a creative strategy of evangelization, and I want to detail seven planks of this strategy:

1. Actually, in graciously inviting

me to speak on this topic, “The Announcement of the Gospel Today, Between *Missio Ad Gentes* and the New Evangelization,” my new brother cardinal, His Eminence, the Secretary of State, asked me to put it into the context of secularism, hinting that my home archdiocese of New York might be the “capital of a secular culture.”

As I trust my friend and new brother cardinal Edwin O’Brien—who grew up in New York—will agree, New York—without denying its dramatic evidence of graphic secularism—is also a very religious city.

There, one finds, even among groups usually identified as materialistic—the media, entertainment, business, politics, artists, writers—an undeniable openness to the divine.

The cardinals who serve Jesus and his Church universal on the Roman Curia may recall the address Pope Benedict gave them at Christmas two years ago, when he celebrated this innate openness to the divine obvious even in those who boast of their secularism:

“We, as believers, must have at heart even those people who consider themselves agnostics or atheists. When we speak of a New Evangelization, these people are perhaps taken aback. They do not want to see themselves as an object of mission or to give up their freedom of thought and will. Yet the question of God remains present even for them. As the first step of evangelization, we must seek to keep this quest alive; we must be concerned that human beings do not set aside the question of God, but, rather, see it as an essential question for their lives. We must make sure that they are open to this question and to the yearning concealed within. I think that today, too, the Church should open a sort of ‘Court of the Gentiles’ in which people might in some way latch on to God, without knowing him and before gaining access to his mystery, at whose service the inner life of the Church stands.”

This is my first point: We believe with

the philosophers and poets of old, who never had the benefit of Revelation, that even a person who brags about being secular and is dismissive of religion has within an undeniable spark of interest in the beyond and recognizes that humanity and creation is a dismal riddle without the concept of some kind of Creator.

A movie popular at home now is *The Way*, starring a popular actor, Martin Sheen. Perhaps you have seen it. He plays a grieving father whose estranged son dies while walking the Camino de Santiago de Compostella in Spain. The father decides, in his grief, to complete the pilgrimage in place of his dead son. He is an icon of a secular man: self-satisfied, dismissive of God and religion, calling himself a “former Catholic,” cynical about faith ... but yet unable

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to deny within him an irrepressible interest in the transcendent, a thirst for something—no, Someone—more, which grows on the way.

Yes, to borrow the report of the apostles to Jesus from last Sunday’s Gospel, “All the people are looking for you!”

They still are ...

2. ... and, my second point: This

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TIPS FOR EVANGELIZATION

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fact gives us immense confidence and courage in the sacred task of mission and New Evangelization.

“Be not afraid,” we’re told, is the most repeated exhortation in the Bible.

After the Council, the good news was that triumphalism in the Church was dead.

The bad news was that so was confidence.

We are convinced, confident and courageous in the New Evangelization because of the power of the Person sending us on mission—who happens to be the second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity—because of the truth of the message and the deep-down openness in even the most secularized of people to the divine.

Confident, yes!

Triumphant, never!

What keeps us from the swagger and arrogance of triumphalism is a recognition of what Pope Paul VI taught in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: The Church herself needs evangelization.

This gives us humility as we confess that *Nemo dat quod non habet*, that the Church has a deep need for the interior conversion that is at the marrow of the call to evangelization.

3. A third necessary ingredient in the recipe of effective mission is that God does not satisfy the thirst of the human heart with a proposition, but with a Person, whose name is Jesus.

The invitation implicit in the *missio ad gentes* and the New Evangelization is not to a doctrine, but to know, love and serve—not a something, but a Someone.

When you began your ministry as successor of St. Peter, Holy Father, you invited us to friendship with Jesus, which is the way you defined sanctity.

There it is ... love of a Person, a relationship at the root of our faith.

As St. Augustine writes, “*Ex una sane*

doctrina impressam fidem credentium cordibus singulorum qui hoc idem credunt verissime dicimus, sed aliud sunt ea quae creduntur, aliud fides qua creduntur” (*De Trinitate*, XIII, 2.5).

4. Yes, and here’s my fourth point: But this Person, Jesus, tells us he is the truth.

So, our mission has a substance, a content, and this 20th anniversary of the Catechism, the approaching 50th anniversary of the Council, and the upcoming Year of Faith charge us to combat catechetical illiteracy.

True enough, the New Evangelization is urgent because secularism has often choked the seed of faith; but that choking was sadly made easy because so many believers really had no adequate knowledge or grasp of the wisdom, beauty and coherence of the Truth.

Cardinal George Pell has observed that “it’s not so much that our people have lost their faith, but that they barely had it to begin with; and, if they did, it was so vapid that it was easily taken away.”

So did Cardinal Avery Dulles call for neo-apologetics, rooted not in dull polemics, but in the Truth that has a name, Jesus.

So did Blessed John Newman, upon reception of his own *biglietto* nominating him a cardinal, warn again of what he constantly called a dangerous liberalism in religion: “... the belief that there is no objective truth in religion, that one creed is as good as another. ... Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment, a taste ...”

And, just as Jesus tells us, “I am the Truth,” he also describes himself as “the Way and the Life.”

The Way of Jesus is in and through his Church, a holy mother who imparts to us his life.

“For what would I ever know of him without her?” asks De Lubac, referring to the intimate identification of Jesus and his Church.

Thus, our mission, the New Evangelization, has essential catechetical

and ecclesial dimensions.

This impels us to think about Church in a fresh way: to think of the Church as a mission. As John Paul II taught in *Redemptoris Missio*, the Church does not “have a mission,” as if “mission” were one of many things the Church does. No, the Church is a mission, and each of us who names Jesus as Lord and Savior should measure ourselves by our mission effectiveness.

Over the 50 years since the convocation of the Council, we have seen the Church pass through the last stages of the Counter-Reformation and rediscover itself as a missionary enterprise. In some venues, this has meant a new discovery of the Gospel. In once-catechized lands, it has meant a re-evangelization that sets out from the shallow waters of institutional maintenance, and, as John Paul II instructed us in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, puts out “into the deep” for a catch.

In many of the countries represented in this college, the ambient public culture once transmitted the Gospel, but does so no more. In those circumstances, the proclamation of the Gospel—the deliberate invitation to enter into friendship with the Lord Jesus—must be at the very center of the Catholic life of all of our people. But in all circumstances, the Second Vatican Council and the two great Popes who have given it an authoritative interpretation are urging us to call our people to think of themselves as missionaries and evangelists.

5. When I was a new seminarian at the North American College here in Rome, all the first-year men from all the Roman theological universities were invited to a Mass at St. Peter’s with the prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, Cardinal John Wright, as celebrant and homilist.

We thought he would give us a cerebral homily. But he began by asking, “Seminarians: Do me and the Church a big favor. When you walk the streets of Rome, smile!”

So, point five: The missionary, the evangelist, must be a person of joy.

“Joy is the infallible sign of God’s presence,” claims Leon Bloy.

When I became archbishop of New York, an old priest told me, “You better stop smiling when you walk the streets of Manhattan, or you’ll be arrested!”

A man dying of AIDS at the Gift of Peace Hospice, administered by the Missionaries of Charity in Cardinal Donald Wuerl’s Archdiocese of Washington, asked for baptism. When

THE MISSIONARY, THE EVANGELIST, MUST BE A PERSON OF JOY ... THE NEW EVANGELIZATION IS ACCOMPLISHED WITH A SMILE, NOT A FROWN.

the priest asked for an expression of faith, the dying man whispered, “All I know is that I’m unhappy, and these sisters are very happy, even when I curse them and spit on them. Yesterday I finally asked them why they were so happy. They replied, ‘Jesus.’ I want this Jesus so I can finally be happy.”

A genuine act of faith, right?

The New Evangelization is accomplished with a smile, not a frown.

The *missio ad gentes* is all about a ‘Yes’ to everything decent, good, true, beautiful and noble in the human person.

The Church is about a Yes! Not a No!

6. And, next-to-last point: The New Evangelization is about love.

Recently, our brother John Thomas Kattrukudiyil, the bishop of Itanagar, in the northeast corner of India, was asked to explain the tremendous growth of the Church in his diocese, registering over

10,000 adult converts a year.

“Because we present God as a loving father, and because people see the Church loving them,” he replied.

Not a nebulous love, he went on, but a love incarnate in wonderful schools for all children, clinics for the sick, homes for the elderly, centers for orphans, food for the hungry.

In New York, the heart of the most hardened secularist softens when visiting one of our inner-city Catholic schools. When one of our benefactors, who described himself as an agnostic, asked Sister Michelle why, at her age, with painful arthritic knees, she continued to serve at one of these struggling but excellent poor schools, she answered, “Because God loves me, and I love him, and I want these children to discover this love.”

7. Joy, love ... and, last point ...

Sorry to bring it up ... but blood.

Tomorrow, 22 of us will hear what most of you have heard before:

“To the praise of God, and the honor of the Apostolic See, receive the red biretta, the sign of the cardinal’s dignity; and know that you must be willing to conduct yourselves with fortitude even to the shedding of your blood: for the growth of the Christian faith, the peace and tranquility of the people of God, and the freedom and spread of the Holy Roman Church.”

Holy Father, can you omit “to the shedding of your blood” when you present me with the biretta?

Of course not! We are but “scarlet audio-visual aids” for all of our brothers and sisters also called to be ready to suffer and die for Jesus.

It was Pope Paul VI who noted wisely that people today learn more from “witness than from words,” and the supreme witness is martyrdom.

Sadly, today we have martyrs in abundance.

Thank you, Holy Father, for so often reminding us of those today suffering persecution for their faith throughout

the world.

Thank you, Cardinal Koch, for calling the Church to an annual “day of solidarity” with those persecuted for the sake of the Gospel and for inviting our ecumenical and interreligious partners to an “ecumenism of martyrdom.”

While we cry for today’s martyrs, while we love them, pray with and for them; while we vigorously advocate on their behalf, we are also very proud of them, brag about them, and trumpet their supreme witness to the world.

They spark the *missio ad gentes* and New Evangelization.

A young man in New York tells me he returned to the Catholic faith of his childhood, which he had jettisoned as a teenager, because he read *The Monks of Tibhirine*, about Trappists martyred in Algeria 15 years ago, and after viewing the drama about them, the French film, *Of Gods and Men*.

Tertullian would not be surprised.

Thank you, Holy Father and brethren, for your patience with my primitive Italian.

When Cardinal Bertone asked me to give this address in Italian, I worried, because I speak Italian like a child.

But, then I recalled that, as a newly ordained parish priest, my first pastor said to me as I went over to school to teach the 6-year-old children their catechism, “Now we’ll see if all your theology sunk in and if you can speak of the faith like a child.”

And maybe that’s a fitting place to conclude: We need to speak again as a child the eternal truth, beauty and simplicity of Jesus and his Church.

Sia lodato Gesu Cristo! ♦

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