

# ad. veritatem

ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

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Christmas  
and Culture

GREGORY WEILER



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Manger

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Christmas  
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# CHRISTMAS AND CULTURE



**GREGORY N. WEILER**

*For a child is born to us,  
and a son is given to us,  
and the government is upon his shoulder;  
and his name shall be called*

*Wonderful,  
Counsellor,  
God the Mighty,  
the Father of the world to come,  
the Prince of Peace.*

*Isaiah 9:6*

Merry Christmas to all in our St. Thomas More Society community. This Advent season has been particularly challenging with the evil of the Connecticut shooting eclipsing the Incarnation of Our Dear Lord in the media. That coupled with the relentless movement to drive the beauty of Christianity from our culture. In my case, all of that with my best friend battling pancreatic cancer. What the heck?

Once again, we are faced with the ageless question of this being a senseless world or a creation ordered in Love. We know in our hearts the correct answer: "Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life."

Yes, even Connecticut and pancreatic cancer have meaning when you think of Mary's yes, the manger, the beauty of the beatitudes actually lived, the Cross and Resurrection. It's not how you die but how you live, how much you love.

SOOOOOOOO let's live this Christmas time and love deep, wide, high and long. A Blessed Christmas to all. -G

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The St. Thomas More Society of Orange County is an independent organization sponsored by lawyers and judges who are practicing members of the Roman Catholic Church.

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### IDEALS OF ST. THOMAS MORE

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

### THE OBJECTIVES OF STMS

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

elected and appointed officials and members of the legal profession.

### MEMBERSHIP IN STMS

Each member of the Society is committed to:

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

### LAWYER'S PRAYER

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

**EDITOR@STTHOMASMORE.NET**

# THE WAITING MANGER

JOHN J. FLYNN III

For eleven months, we slouch toward Bethlehem. Then, at Advent, we begin the journey in earnest, and catch sight of a star out of place, and a flock of shepherds craning their necks, dumbfounded by the tumult of a great choir in the sky. And there, at the center of it all, three perfect nobodies, momentarily homeless, in a shelter made for animals, yet attended by angels and kings.

There is perhaps no greater challenge at Christmas than to open ourselves to the shock of the Incarnation. It is not a time for theology, but a time of silence, of encounter and witness, of meditation and reflection: What is sin that it has caused our death, and who is God that he has saved us from it by marrying his divinity to human flesh? Could even the devil's intelligence have discerned, or even guessed at, what had been planned to purchase our freedom?

The Incarnate God was born at Christmas, in poverty, anonymity and exile. Why not in power and splendor? One answer, perhaps, is that one can rise from a low estate (as from a tomb), but not from a throne. However we render the answer in words, the mystery we encounter at Christmas,



like the other mysteries of the faith, cannot be fully enclosed by the intellect. Nevertheless, though we cannot in this life solve the mystery, we can have confidence that all the mysteries, like the Incarnation, will reveal to us the same answer: the love of God, the very heart of the Church.

At Christmas, we fall again into the light-filled abyss, the Word made flesh, love beyond understanding. Christmas is a time of conversion, of things made new, our defenses, complacency and resistance overcome by the Virgin birth, every heart finally a manger, ready to receive the Child. ♦

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTH	DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
December	Wed., Dec. 19, 12:00 p.m.	Fr. Hugh Barbour, chaplain of the St. Thomas More Society, will speak.	Jilio Ryan 14661 Franklin, #150 Tustin, California <a href="http://jilioryan.com">jilioryan.com</a>
	Sun., Dec. 23, 8:30-11:30 a.m.	Come to help cook and serve breakfast to the homeless of the community at Isaiah House. <a href="http://www.occatholicworker.org">www.occatholicworker.org</a>	Isaiah House 316 S. Cypress Avenue Santa Ana, CA 92701 (714) 835-6304
January	Wed., Jan. 16, 12:00 p.m.	Lunch meeting with speaker Dr. Mary Kotob.	Jilio Ryan (same as above)

# ADVENT, SUFFERING AND THE PROMISE OF JOY

**ARCHBISHOP CHARLES J. CHAPUT**  
ARCHBISHOP OF PHILADELPHIA

Scripture is a love story, the story of God's love for humanity. But it's a real story filled with real people. It's not a fairytale. In Scripture, as in the real world, evil things happen to innocent persons. The wicked seem to thrive. Cruelty and suffering are common.

The Psalmist cries out to heaven again and again for justice; Job is crushed by misfortune; Herod murders blameless infants; Jesus is nailed to a cross. God is good, but we human beings are free, and being free, we help fashion the nature of our world with the choices we make. This is why evil is frightening, but it's not incomprehensible. We know it from intimate experience. What we never quite expect is for our private sins, multiplied and fermented by millions of lives with the same or similar "little" sins, to somehow feed the kind evil that walks into a Connecticut school and guns down 26 innocent lives, 20 of them children.

Thirteen years ago, as archbishop of Denver, I helped bury some of the victims of the Columbine High School massacre. Nothing is more helpless or heart-breaking than to sit with parents who kissed their children goodbye in the morning and will never see them alive again in this world. The pain of loss is excruciating. Words of comfort all sound empty. The victims in the Sandy Hook massacre were even younger and more numerous than those at Columbine, and if such intense sorrow could be measured, the suffering of the Connecticut family members left behind might easily be worse. With such young lives cut so short, every parental memory of an absent child will be precious -- compounded by a hunger for more time and more memories that will never happen. This is why we need to keep the grieving families so urgently in our hearts and prayers.

People will ask, "How could a loving God allow such wickedness?" Every life lost in Connecticut was unique, precious and irreplaceable. But the evil was routine; every human generation is rich with it. Why does God allow war? Why does God allow hunger? Why does God allow the kind of poverty that strips away the dignity of millions of people in countries around the world?

All of these questions sound reasonable, and yet they're all evasions. We might as well ask, "Why does God allow us to be free?" We have the gift of being loved by a Creator who seeks our love in return; and being loved, we will never be coerced



by the One who loves us. God gives us the dignity of freedom - freedom to choose between right and wrong, a path of life or a path of death. We are not the inevitable products of history or economics or any other determinist equation. We're free, and therefore we're responsible for both the beauty and the suffering we help make. Why does God allow wickedness? He allows it because we - or others just like us - choose it. The only effective antidote to the wickedness around us is to live differently from this moment forward. We make the future beginning now.

In these final days of Advent, the Church urges us to lift up our hearts and prepare to rejoice. There's nothing remotely naïve in this call to joy; the Church knows the harshness of the world far too well for empty pieties. The evil in the world is bitter and brutal, but it's not new. Nor, in the light of human history, is it a surprise. Yet in the Old Testament, the Song of Songs tells us that "love is strong as death," and in God's redeeming plan, love is stronger than death. The surprise is the persistence of God's fidelity and mercy. The surprise is that, despite our sins, we still long to be the people God intended us to be.

Christmas is the birthday of Jesus Christ, our Emmanuel, a name that means "God with us." The surprise is that God sends his own Son into a dark world to bring us light and hope. So it has been with every generation since Bethlehem. So it remains -- even now.

*From Zenit.org; permalink: <http://www.zenit.org/article-36206?l=english>*

# CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WITH BISHOP KEVIN W. VANN

HELD DEC. 13



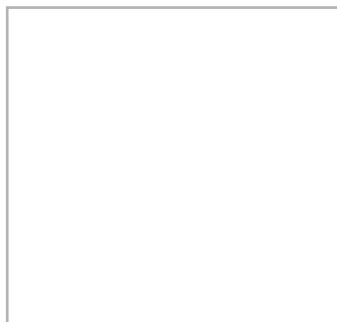
*Christmas Celebration*



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