Avalanche of Grace
GREGORY WEILER

The Ancient and the New
JOHN J. FLYNN III

Easter Pearl
BISHOP NORMAN MCFARLAND

The Empty House
GREGORY WEILER

THE PRAYER OF ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO
When pondering what to write during the Easter Triduum, what might help even one STMS member in their search for God (or more accurately, might open them up for God’s search for them) my brain said: TOO much!

The gift of Himself in the Eucharist on Holy Thursday? His Pascal Sacrifice on Good Friday, the greatest act of love in the history of the Universe--Redemption? Our Lord’s destruction of death on Easter? Truly an avalanche of Grace.

All these gifts, but do we appreciate them? Do we even believe these extravagant gifts are real? Do these gifts give you peace; are they your “lifeboat” among the sea of craziness of your life? Whether we believe or not does not affect the fact that they are reality.

The only significance to our personal belief is our personal peace and eternal destiny--peace and the right kind of eternity. That’s kind of important to this mother’s son.

The Church provides us this season to remind us of the completed gifts of this avalanche of Grace which is ours always. We pray that the beautiful Liturgies of the Upper Room, Calvary and the empty tomb. These things strengthen our faith and encourage us headlong into a love affair with He who never disappoints, Happy Easter. PAX ~ GNW

Gregory N. Weiler is a partner at Palmieri, Tyler, Wiener, Wilhelm & Waldron LLP in Irvine.

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.

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

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Renewal is not about the creation of new things, or innovation for its own sake, but about the revitalization of the external and visible aspects of the faith, so as to give a more powerful expression to the very spiritual energies that have propelled the Church from the beginning. In fact, we can add nothing new to these energies; our task as Christians is to cooperate in their expression. Any modification of the external aspects of the faith will be measured more or less successful depending upon the degree to which it has mobilized and communicated to the world those original energies. Paul VI, in his opening address to the second session of the Second Vatican Council, perfectly captured this defining criterion of renewal: “The council is striving, that is, to enhance in the Church that beauty of perfection and holiness which imitation of Christ and mystical union with Him in the Holy Spirit can alone confer.”

One of the great ironies of recent Church history is that the Council is so often viewed as the product of a liberalizing trend. In fact, the Council was in large part inspired by a restorationist agenda, as evidenced by the Ressourcement movement of the 20th Century, whose proponents, like Henri de Lubac and Yves Congar, championed an aggressive drawing upon scriptural and patristic resources in an attempt to break certain habitual ways of thinking that had pointlessly limited the Church’s ability to engage the world in dialogue.

The Church is an institution both divine and human. It is inevitable that she would and always will be burdened to various degrees by the sin and weakness of her human members and leaders. Certain purely human habits of mind and heart can of course influence the direction of thought and practice, at times impeding the Church’s essentially evangelical mission, which requires a kind of corporate “extroversion,” which in turn demands the conversion of those habits and attitudes that tend to obscure the face of the Lord. So, the Church from time to time stops to examine her conscience, and ask whether there is a need for purification. It is precisely the task of self-examination that may have been the primary objective of the Council, which was not, as contrasted with previous councils, to state or clarify doctrine or dogma, but to invite the Church’s introspection, and an increase in the Church’s self-awareness. Perhaps then seeing more clearly the face of the Lord, and emerging with a deeper understanding of the desires of his heart, the Church then gains the courage to admit the errors and sins of the past, and is propelled by this vision to aid more effectively in the quenching of the Lord’s thirst for souls.

This objective of change and reform in the name of the Church’s enrichment and increased self-awareness was tragically misconstrued by many as a justification for pointless innovations and doctrinal deviations that only thwarted authentic self-discovery and self-realization. It should therefore have been no surprise that both John Paul II and Benedict very forcefully put the Church back on a path that was true to the Council, in recognition of the undeniable reality that it was true orthodoxy that inspired the Council in the first place, and produced some of the greatest magisterial writing in the Church’s history. By that means, John Paul II and Benedict built a stable platform for the new initiatives of Francis, who, addressing the world from this fortified scaffold, now can speak with confidence about the Church’s true nature, about the Heart of the Lord, eternally one with the heart of Church teaching. ♦
Are you content with your spiritual life? Do you often find yourself frazzled, exhausted, and seemingly under assault from all sides? Do you have that gnawing feeling that you could be a better spouse or parent? Are you not at peace even though you are a “successful” lawyer or judge?

Do you simply “long” for more? Do you want to make Jesus more than an abstraction in your life? Troubling questions, huh?!

If you have the gumption to really put out into the deep, to change the status quo for the good, consider one of these life changing spiritual adventures.

**PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP**

**Missionaries of the Poor**

Please join a small group of STMS members in visiting and serving with the Missionaries of the Poor in their clinics in Jamaica or Haiti. Father Ho Lung (often seen on EWTN) and his brothers serve the least of our brethren (clinics which serve orphans, the severely handicapped, HIV infected and all the disenfranchised) with unbelievable selflessness. Join the brothers for a week in their Monastery, with them in their monastic prayer and venture out each day to serve. While not for those desiring a little spiritual vacation, your visit will be life changing and will, in a way that cannot be described in words, blast you out of what might be a Christian comfort zone.

An incidental benefit will be to be with Father Ho Lung, a priest who we can only liken to a living Mother Theresa.

If you’re interested, call Gregory Weiler: (949) 300-4581.

**The Spiritual Exercises**

Join one of the small groups for the famous Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, the same exercises that every Jesuit experiences during a 30-day retreat but which we laity can experience over nine months. These are the same exercises which formed Pope Francis!

Meet once a week with a small group and leader and pray through Scripture in a “special” way for nine months. The Spiritual Exercises have been a pillar of Catholic formation for almost five Centuries and are available to us in Orange County. If you ask around many of the most passionate Catholics you know will have gone through the exercises.

For more information contact David Werner: (949) 244-1566.

**Attend a Cursillo Retreat**

Cursillo, called a “short course in Christianity” has probably influenced more passionate Catholics in Orange County than any other movement or Ministry. How? Again it is hard to describe how a three-day retreat can be life changing.

However there is no denying that the men and women who start the Retreat Thursday night are enabled, Grace charged, and are sort of divinized by Sunday afternoon. The founders of the STMS started the Society after their Cursillo. It’s not some secret society or clique, but rather a three-day retreat with 15 talks that build on each other, all given in the “oven” of an incredibly loving Christian community.

Cursillo is a Catholic must, especially if you think you don’t need it!

Email Don Hunsberger (dah@hunsbergerlaw.com) for more information.

If you long for more, pray on participating in one of these gifts. “Lord should I do this? Lord, give me the courage and Grace to break my spiritual complacency.”
“Mark that moment well [Jesus looking at the good thief from the cross], when Jesus Christ was hanging at the high point of all history, when the redemption of the entire human race was being gathered into one supreme act of crucifixion, when Christ was twisting under the torment of his own death agony; yet did He find time to fix His divine attention one man, and to provide for one man’s happiness.

For on that day when neither Herod, nor his entire court could make him speak, nor all the power of Jerusalem, could make Him step down from that cross, he turns to a single quivering life beside Him, speaks and saves a thief.

If Christ could give so much attention and care to one lonely criminal, would it not be good to remind ourselves that our own individual happiness means just as much to Him?

Would it not be a good idea to remind ourselves that we are still God’s own dear individual children?

For this is the magnificent intimacy of Christianity - it is the intimacy of God stepping down in the broad field of life to touch one blade of grass. It is the intimacy of the Divine Shepherd who leaves the 99 wounds of His suffering on the cross, to go out and heal our one.”

Taken from Bishop Norman McFarland’s March 2002 presentation to the Society on the Hound of Heaven. Bishop McFarland presents one of the most beautiful images of our Christian faith ever presented to the STMS:
THE EMPTY HOUSE

GREGORY N. WEILER

It was a brilliant summer morning on 17 Mile Drive, winding our way through the Monterey Peninsula. After a cordial greeting by the security guard at the world famous Pebble Beach development in Carmel, California we meandered between groves of Monterey pines, famous golf courses and intentionally designed rustic mansions. My law school classmate and I have stayed close these some 25 years, and he is a super successful trust and estate attorney serving the exclusive clientele of the Monterey Peninsula. We had to make a quick stop at the home of one of his clients who had recently passed away at age 95. He needed to pick up some items at the House and asked my opinion on a few matters pertaining to the estate.

The House was nestled in about three acres in between a number of large modern Pebble Beach homes. It was a sprawling, single-story ranch style house, kind of run down, run-of-the-mill landscaped with a beautiful 180° view of the Pacific. The House’s owner was a wealthy man, the son of one of the most successful Western artists of the early 20th Century, a pioneer of the Monterey Peninsula, and certainly able to afford the finest lot and finest home of his time.

We parked the car and walked into the small attached garage which was full of all kinds of garage junk, but really old garage junk. We stopped for a couple of minutes in the garage and I observed “boy this stuff is really kind of out of the 40’s and 50’s, really almost antique.” When I asked my friend what he was going to do with all the stuff, he simply stated that he was going to get a bid to “haul it all away.”

We entered the House through a dingy hallway and I discovered that it had been emptied of furniture. It was apparent that nothing had been done to the House in many decades, with dull hardwood floors, tattered rugs and faded paint. The chandeliers and light fixtures were dusty crystal, quite elegant and must have been top-of-the-line fixtures when installed in the 1930’s. The kitchen was just like my grandmothers, simple by today’s standards but I am sure quite upscale when it was constructed. All of the kitchen utensils and appliances had been taken out of the drawers and cupboards and placed on the counters. They too looked like antiques to me, and it was hard for me to fathom that up to a few weeks before they had been used by the owner as everyday utensils.

We wandered through the empty hallways of the House, through the large living room with a vaulted ceiling, long faded hallways, past a beautifully paneled library, now empty of books, and into a spacious bedroom. The House had settled over the years, and there was a marked incline to one side, noticeable especially to a real estate attorney. I noted that the House was probably a “scrapper” to my old friend.

The master bedroom was also empty, just a faded outline where the bed had been, empty closets and empty cabinets in the attached bathroom.

The House was empty, an empty vessel where the single man had spent some six or seven decades living his life as we now live ours. He was rich by the standards of his day, had the finest home, in the finest location, with the finest fixtures. But the House was empty now. The empty House with its crystal fixtures and delicate silk laced curtains, discolored from the years but yet still hanging, made me uncomfortable, lonely, sad. I wondered about the old man and if this empty House was all there.

... A REMINDER THAT THE OPPORTUNITIES TO LOVE GIVEN EACH HUMAN LIFE ARE FINITE, NOT TO BE WASTED.

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THE EMPTY HOUSE
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was of his life. I wondered who he talked to, who he loved, who loved him, and what did this man leave behind, besides the empty House?

"A bid to haul this stuff away," a "scrapper," all the finest floor coverings and wall coverings, crystal fixtures and workmanship, all nothing but a demolition job?

I could not help but think about my life, my garage, my house, my remodel with plasma TV and leather couches. "Are my treasurers such that moths and decay will destroy them." "How much did he leave?" - "Everything." What would I leave, just an empty faded house?

The empty House was certainly a stark reminder of the priorities urged on us by the faith. That all material things all too quickly pass away. To keep our eyes fixed on things eternal, our souls, our loving actions, our relationships and most importantly on who we will spend eternity with. A reminder of how important it is to pass the good news from ourselves to our spouses, children and friends. A reminder that the opportunities to love given to each human life are finite, not to be wasted.

The empty House made me think of our 21st Century obsession with things, our myopic focus on the transient and neglect of the eternal. While recognizing that we all have to eat in the short term, nonetheless the Gospel teaches that the siren's song of American culture, to loveless sex and stuff, call us incessantly to a life which could result in just an empty House.

For me, the empty House at Pebble Beach is just a vivid reminder to stay focused on the things eternal and not squander the opportunities to live a life of long-term significance, to serve, to love and to make sure that others know that Christ has promised us that there is far more at the end of one's life than just an empty House. ♦

THE PRAYER OF OSCAR ROMERO

"It helps now and then to step back and take the long view" - wise words from Archbishop Oscar Romero. The Archbishop served the people of El Salvador and was assassinated in 1980 while he was saying mass in San Salvador.

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

Amen.