

SYMPOSIUM

**FOR ALL THE SAINTS:
HOW THE LIVES OF EXTRAORDINARY
CATHOLICS CAN SHED LIGHT ON THE
ORDINARY PRACTICE OF LAW**

INTRODUCTION

AMELIA J. UELMEN[†]

The search party is out for a “genuinely lay spirituality,” Catholic journalist Russell Shaw recently observed.¹ Deeply involved in the world, lay people need to craft a spirituality that does not try to escape from the world, but points toward it. As Shaw reflected, it must build on their everyday experiences and encourage Christians “to infuse one’s milieu—workplace, classroom, home, neighborhood—with gospel values.”²

Might even lawyers dare to hope for such an integrated vision of their faith and their work? Since 2001, the Fordham University School of Law Institute on Religion, Law & Lawyer’s Work has been exploring this question.³ Specifically, its Catholic Lawyer’s Program, inaugurated in 2001 with a lecture by Avery Cardinal Dulles, aims to provide a forum for lawyers to reflect on how Catholic teachings and traditions may challenge and enrich

[†] Director, Institute on Religion, Law & Lawyer’s Work, Fordham University School of Law. For more information about the Institute’s work and upcoming conferences, visit the Institute’s website at <http://law.fordham.edu/lawreligion> or contact lawreligion@law.fordham.edu.

¹ RUSSELL SHAW, CATHOLIC LAITY IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH 152 (2005).

² *Id.* at 153.

³ For a history of the “religious lawyering” movement and an overview of the approach of the Institute on Religion, Law & Lawyer’s Work, see generally Russell G. Pearce & Amelia J. Uelmen, *Religious Lawyering in a Liberal Democracy: A Challenge and an Invitation*, 55 CASE W. RES. L. REV. 127 (2004); Amelia J. Uelmen, *An Explicit Connection Between Faith and Justice in Catholic Legal Education: Why Rock the Boat?*, 81 U. DET. MERCY L. REV. 921 (2004).

their approach to law practice and strengthen their commitment to work for the common good.⁴

The title of the 2005–2006 Catholic Lawyer’s Program four-part speaker series, “For All the Saints,” may be read in at least two ways. First, it refers of course to the popular hymn,⁵ a tribute to those extraordinary men and women who have led lives of heroic virtue and fidelity to God’s grace,⁶ some of whom have been officially canonized, and who now “from their labors rest.”⁷ For many practicing lawyers the hymn might evoke a sense of contrast between the beatific vision that the saints now enjoy and the valley of tears in which they continue to labor: “O blest communion, fellowship divine! We feebly struggle, they in glory shine.”⁸

A second reading of the title adds another dimension that might be held in slight tension with the first. “For *all* the saints” can also be read more broadly, as St. Paul addressed entire communities, “[t]o all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philip’pi,”⁹ encouraging all Christians to live “as is fitting among saints,”¹⁰ “[f]or this is the will of God, your sanctification.”¹¹

For many people the word “sanctity” conjures up images of an anachronistic flight from the complexities of modern life and “worldly” affairs, if they take the time even to probe its meaning.¹² But recent reflections on the vocation of the lay

⁴ See Avery Cardinal Dulles, *Catholic Social Teaching and American Legal Practice*, 30 FORDHAM URB. L.J. 277 (2002). This is the program’s inaugural lecture, and it is published together with responses. See John D. Feerick, *Response to Avery Cardinal Dulles*, 30 FORDHAM URB. L.J. 291 (2002); Jennifer M. Mone, *Catholic Social Teaching and American Legal Practice: A Practical Response*, 30 FORDHAM URB. L.J. 299 (2002). Other events have touched on topics of whether it is appropriate to bring religious values into corporate counseling, the dilemmas Catholic lawyers face when handling divorce cases, Catholic teaching on work-life balance, and the role of lawyers and the legal system in the clergy abuse cases. The 2004–05 series, *Catholics and the Death Penalty: Lawyers, Jurors and Judges*, is published at 44 J. CATH. LEGAL STUD. 277 (2005). Programs are co-sponsored by the Guild of Catholic Lawyers of the Archdiocese of New York and the St. John’s University School of Law Journal of Catholic Legal Studies.

⁵ *For All the Saints*, reprinted in GEORGE WILLIAM RUTLER, BEST AND BRIGHTEST: STORIES OF HYMNS 188 (1998).

⁶ See CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ¶ 828 (2d ed. 1997).

⁷ RUTLER, *supra* note 5, at 188.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Phil.* 1:1 (Revised Standard Version).

¹⁰ *Eph.* 5:3 (Revised Standard Version).

¹¹ 1 *Thes.* 4:3 (Revised Standard Version).

¹² Reflecting on Paul’s exhortation to the Thessalonians, Focolare founder

faithful, especially in light of the Second Vatican Council, draw an explicit connection between the common vocation to holiness and involvement in earthly activities.

As Pope John Paul II explained in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, “[e]veryone in the Church, precisely because they are members, receive and thereby share in the common vocation to holiness.”¹³ More specifically, “[t]he vocation of the lay faithful to holiness implies that life according to the Spirit expresses itself in a particular way in their *involvement in temporal affairs* and in their *participation in earthly activities*.”¹⁴ Quoting the 1987 Synod of Bishops, he drew out the challenge:

The unity of life of the lay faithful is of the greatest importance: indeed they must be sanctified in everyday professional and social life. Therefore, to respond to their vocation, the lay faithful must see their daily activities as an occasion to join themselves to God, fulfill his will, serve other people and lead them to communion with God in Christ.¹⁵

If involvement in temporal affairs is not an obstacle to sanctity, might even lawyers dare to hope that the ordinary practice of law can become a path to holiness? If so, it seems that a first step might be to help them create the space and time for the reflection which would allow them to see their daily activities in the light of this vocation. The contributions to the series, some of which are published in this volume, are part of that initial effort. As the participants in the series can attest, the reflections gathered here are in and of themselves an invitation to contemplation, to take the time to reflect, to ask those deeper questions about our lives, our work, and God’s call to holiness even in the context of the ordinary practice of law.

Chiara Lubich explored the obstacles in modern culture to engaging the idea of sanctity:

It sounds like something from a time long past, from the age of the monasteries, from some incomprehensible and oppressive medieval world, just a fixation of weak minds who believe in fantasies and indulge them as an escape from the real difficulties of modern life

The acceleration of life today leaves no time for people to catch their breath, and modern means of communication absorb all their free time. They have no time left to think and ask the deeper questions. They are entirely indifferent to the idea of sanctity; it has little importance for them.

CHIARA LUBICH, *ESSENTIAL WRITINGS* 71 (2007).

¹³ JOHN PAUL II, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI* ¶ 16 (1988).

¹⁴ *Id.* ¶ 17.

¹⁵ *Id.* (citations omitted).

The series opened in October 2005 with reflections on the life and work of St. Thomas More, offered by Dr. Gerard Wegemer, a professor of literature at the University of Dallas, and the founding director of the Center for Thomas More Studies.¹⁶ For lawyers, Dr. Wegemer's scholarship is an excellent entry into More's extraordinary example of integrity and sanctity as lived out in professional life. Many of us were intrigued to learn that what we thought were More's last words, "I die the King's good servant, *but* God's first,"¹⁷ is actually a mistranslation. As Dr. Wegemer noted, the correct translation from the original French newsletter account should be: "I die the King's good servant *and* God's first."¹⁸ Through this and other texts—a rich collection of poetry, letters and reflections—Dr. Wegemer painted a picture of More's life as an example not so much of defiant tension between civil and religious obligations, but of hope for their harmonious integration and reconciliation.

For the February 2006 program, *A View of the Monastery*, Fordham Law School's Professor Jacqueline Nolan-Haley was our guide. We are fortunate to include in this volume her reflections on the "rich reservoir" of St. Teresa of Avila's spirituality, and how the Catholic mystical and meditative traditions promise a "radical alternative to the generic spirituality of many efforts to resolve the legal profession's vocational crisis."¹⁹ The evening also included my own musings on St. Bernard of Clairvaux's lively engagement with the lawyers of his twelfth-century day, which have been published in a separate symposium.²⁰

¹⁶ Visit the Center for Thomas More Studies website at <http://www.thomasmorestudies.org/>. Dr. Wegemer's numerous publications include: THOMAS MORE ON STATEMANSHIP (1996), and THOMAS MORE: A PORTRAIT OF COURAGE (1995).

¹⁷ See, e.g., PETER ACKROYD, THE LIFE OF THOMAS MORE 405 (1998); R.W. CHAMBERS, THOMAS MORE 349 (1938); JAMES MONTI, THE KING'S GOOD SERVANT BUT GOD'S FIRST: THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF ST. THOMAS MORE (1997). In the screenplay of the 1966 production of *A Man for All Seasons*, Thomas More's last words are recounted as: "I die His Majesty's good servant . . . but God's first." The death scene in the original 1960 play did not include the line. See ROBERT BOLT, A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS 162 (1990) (recounting More's final words as "[h]e will not refuse one who is so blithe to go to him").

¹⁸ A THOMAS MORE SOURCE BOOK 357 (Gerard B. Wegemer & Stephen W. Smith eds., 2004).

¹⁹ Jacqueline Nolan-Haley, *Finding Interior Peace in the Ordinary Practice of Law: Wisdom from the Spiritual Tradition of St. Teresa of Avila*, 46 J. CATH. LEGAL STUD. 29 (2007).

²⁰ See Amelia J. Uelman, *A View of the Legal Profession from a Mid-Twelfth*

In April 2006, Gregory A. Kalscheur, S.J., professor of law at Boston College, provided deep insight into St. Ignatius of Loyola's own pilgrimage and his experience of "God laboring in the world in a way that breaks down any walls that separate work from faith."²¹ In a beautiful weave of Ignatius' story and his own, Father Kalscheur illustrated the depth and power of Ignatian spirituality and practice of discernment as an extraordinary gift which can help lawyers to respond to God's call with integrity, freedom, and joy.²²

In June 2006, Professor Michael A. Scaperlanda of University of Oklahoma College of Law brought the series to a close with his exploration of the "wonder-filled mystery" of the "little way" of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Those who work in office buildings might especially appreciate Thérèse's suggested shortcut to sanctity, as Professor Scaperlanda recounted:

We live in an age of inventions. We need no longer climb laboriously up flights of stairs; in well-to-do houses there are lifts. And I was determined to find a lift to carry me to Jesus, for I was far too small to climb the steep stairs of perfection.²³

But "be careful what you ask for," Professor Scaperlanda confided, as he shared his own gratitude for an ear-popping ride in Thérèse's elevator, and his subsequent conviction that her "radical realism, humility and completely abandonment into the loving arms of God" is a path open to everyone, including lawyers.²⁴

Based on this small but perhaps representative sample, we cannot be so sure that these saints should be included as among those "from their labors rest"²⁵—for their lives and texts continue to work, helping us to face the problems and questions of our own times.

We are deeply indebted to the Guild of Catholic Lawyers of the Archdiocese of New York whose collaboration made the series possible. And we are especially grateful for the anything-but-

Century Monastery, 71 *FORDHAM L. REV* 1517 (2003).

²¹ Gregory A. Kalschuer, S.J., *Ignatian Spirituality and the Life of the Lawyer: Finding God in All Things—Even in the Ordinary Practice of the Law*, 46 *J. CATH. LEGAL STUD.* 7 (2007).

²² *Id.* at 16.

²³ Michael A. Scaperlanda, *Lawyering in the Little Way of St. Thérèse of Lisieux with Complete Abandonment and Love*, 46 *J. CATH. LEGAL STUD.* 43 (2007).

²⁴ *Id.* at 62.

²⁵ RUTLER, *supra* note 5, at 188.

restful labors of the editors and staff of the *St. John's Law Review*, who are responsible for the publication of the *Journal of Catholic Legal Studies* and whose work to publish the series ensures that the invitation to contemplation may be extended to many others.