



# *The Thomas More Society of America*

*Newsletter*

Winter 2003

## *Society Calendar*

February 7, 2003:

Saint Patrick in the City presents a special First Friday Mass to commemorate the anniversary of Saint Thomas More. Mass will be followed by a talk on the life of Thomas More presented by Monsignor Peter J. Vaghi. 7:30 a.m. Mass, St. Patrick's Church, 10th and G St. NW.

March 2003:

A Lenten luncheon at the Army Navy Club will take place sometime during March. Date to be announced in mailed invitation. The Army Navy Club is located at Farragut Square, 901 17th St. NW.

June 2003:

The annual feast day Mass for St. Thomas More will be held in late June. Celebration will include a luncheon and will be held at St. Joseph's Church on Capitol Hill.

November 21, 2003:

The Society's annual dinner will be held at the Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland. Details concerning the speaker and invitations will be mailed closer to the event.

## *Recent Events...*

*Annual Dinner: George Weigel*

The Annual Dinner of the Thomas More Society of America was held on Friday, November 22, 2002 at the Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, MD. Our Dinner speaker was George Weigel, a leading Catholic theologian and one of America's leading commentators on issues of religion and public life. He summarized the accomplishments of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II and shed considerable light on him as a person and in his role as head of the Church. Mr. Weigel is an accomplished author, his best known work being his internationally acclaimed biography of the Pope, *Witness To Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*. His latest major work, released in 2002, is *The Courage To Be Catholic: Crisis, Reform, and the Future of the Church*.

-contributed by President Edward Grenier

## *Announcement*

Anyone interested in receiving email notifications to upcoming events, please email Catherine Sienkiewicz at [cmmatous@yahoo.com](mailto:cmmatous@yahoo.com).

Thomas More, counselor and advocate learned in the law, chancellor of charity and jurist of justice, merry martyr, scholar and canonized saint, may the Lord of all law and of all lawyers make me at your request a little more like you today than I was yesterday.

## **Judge Damich: On Being a Christian and a Judge**

The Society held its Winter Luncheon at the Army-Navy Club in Washington, D.C. on January 22, 2003. The Honorable Edward J. Damich, Chief Judge of the United States Court of Federal Claims (USCFC), delivered the Luncheon address, on the topic "Being a Christian and Serving As a Judge."

Judge Damich described his background as a Croatian-American raised in a strong Catholic family and with a strong Catholic education. He also summarized his past experience: as a professor at several law schools (including currently as an adjunct professor at Georgetown University Law Center), a Commissioner of the Copyright Royalty Tribunal, Chief Intellectual Property Counsel for the Senate Judiciary Committee, and a Judge of the USCFC before being elevated to Chief Judge. What is most striking is that President Clinton appointed him to the bench, and the current President Bush elevated him to Chief Judge.

Judge Damich noted the irony of speaking on the topic of being a Christian and serving as a judge on the anniversary of the "dreadful Roe v. Wade decision." He noted that he was sorely tempted to put himself in the position of a Justice of the Supreme Court and to reflect on how his "faith would inform – should inform? – a decision on this issue." However, he decided to resist that temptation, since he believed that his topic was more intimate, i.e., his personal experience being a Christian and serving as a judge.

A fundamental challenge in reflecting on this topic is how to identify that which is specifically "Christian" in judging. Using reason alone, as did the ancient philosophers such as Aristotle, one can identify several natural virtues pertinent to judging well. Seven such virtues are (1) impartiality, i.e., not being swayed by emotional attitudes toward the parties; (2) fairness (giving each side an equal opportunity to make its case); (3) adherence to the law (letting it make the decision when it can); (4) restraint (recognizing the role that one plays in a democracy); (5) respect for the dignity of individuals (treating the parties before you with respect); (6) diligence (getting decisions out on time); and (7) resolve (managing the case, making the right decision despite the possibility of criticism).

Judge Damich pointed out, "But, as Catholics, we should not be surprised at the existence of natural virtue. St. Thomas Aquinas is celebrated for

reconciling Christianity and the natural ethics of Aristotle. Man is not utterly incapable of good without Christ, but he is severely flawed. And man cannot attain his ultimate goal – union with God – without grace. Furthermore, it is more difficult to recognize what are the natural virtues without divine revelation, e.g., the ten commandments. And even in the practice of the natural virtues, God aids us with his assisting grace."

However, Judge Damich noted, as St. Augustine said, "Even in good works, the devil lays a trap." There is such a thing as virtue "gone mad," the corrective for which is faith. A key example of "virtue gone mad" is Communism. It took the laudable goals of basic economic equality and the elimination of alienation in the work place and pursued them "without restraint and producing a monstrous result."

In the microcosm of our daily activities, self-delusion causes us to label mere stubbornness as "adherence to principle" or mere selfishness as "standing up for oneself." So, a judge, even when he or she practices virtue in general, might have some distortion creep in. Judge Damich noted, "It seems to me that one of the most obvious marks of original sin is our inability – without help – to be objective about ourselves. Thus, I attribute to my faith – which is itself a grace – that I recognize and am attracted to natural virtues, especially those appropriate to the office of a judge. And I attribute to grace the ability to practice those virtues in some measure some part of the time. I am by no means perfect." Thus, it is through grace that we recognize and best implement the natural virtues and avoid falling into the Devil's trap.

Where do we obtain this grace? Judge Damich's answer: "There's sometimes a capriciousness in grace – like the wind, it blows wherever it wills. It can show up unbidden. But Christ encourages us to ask for his assistance: 'Seek and you shall find . . . .' Most mornings, before I go to work, I stand before a beautiful icon of Christ that I have in my apartment, and I ask for the grace of 'right judgment.' Insofar as I occasionally exercise 'right judgment,' I believe that it is because of this."

*-contributed by President Edward Grenier*

**Saint Thomas More  
Pray for us!**