



# THOMAS MORE SOCIETY *of* AMERICA

Fall 2018 NEWSLETTER

## Moral Duty and the Rule of Law

by Maya M. Noronha

On May 16, 2017, the Thomas More Society of America hosted Judge William H. Pryor, Jr., of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit for a discussion of “Moral Duty and the Rule of Law.”

Judge Pryor invoked the example of St. Thomas More in exploring the interaction between religion and the rule of law. He said that religion plays a vital role in holding him to his oath of office and the honest and diligent performance of the judicial



*Judge William H. Pryor*

function. But he observed the judge has no authority to use the powers of his office to advance personal ends, even those stemming from religion. To do so would be to subvert the law to the person of the judge, which is fatal to the rule of law. Judge Pryor illustrated

these themes through examples from his own career, most prominently the removal of a Ten Commandments monument from the Alabama Supreme Court building in conformity with a federal court’s injunction. As Alabama Attorney General, Judge Pryor helped carry out the injunction over the objection of the then-Chief Justice of the state supreme court.

The Society co-sponsored the event with Hillsdale College and the Thomistic Institute, and Hillsdale College was kind enough to host the event at the Kirby Center.

## Observing Our Patron’s Feast Day

by Stephanie Maloney

On June 22, 2018, the Society celebrated St. Thomas More’s Feast Day with Mass at St. Joseph’s on Capitol Hill, followed by the annual reading of the Society’s prayer at the Thomas More statue, and lunch. Baltimore

Archbishop William E. Lori served as principal celebrant and homilist. Society chaplain Fr. Richard Mullins, and St. Joseph Pastor Fr. William Gurnee concelebrated.

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## THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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# President's Report

Friends of Sir Thomas More,

The last year has been a turbulent time within the Church, the legal profession, and the body politic at large. Against this backdrop, the Society has sought to point to the example of our namesake, Sir Thomas More. In his life and martyrdom, Sir Thomas More asks us to pursue the permanent and eternal. In the year to come, we invite you to join us in promoting More's works and enduring relevance.

More, as a humanist, encourages us to consider truth, beauty, and goodness. And as a saint, he teaches us to look to Christ, who "brings us from His Spirit consolation that will give us the strength to persevere in those deeds that will lift us up to heaven."

As you will find in this newsletter, the Thomas More Society of America has had a

banner year. We have hosted leading lay people, clergy, and religious for topical conversations, partnered with organizations across our nation's capital, enhanced our website, and expanded our presence on social media.



Special thanks are in order to our outgoing president, Maya Noronha, and our longtime treasurer, Elsa Thompson.

Our Society is growing and looking for new ways to bring the life of Sir Thomas More to others. We hope that you will consider joining us as we seek to promote interest in the life and works of Sir Thomas More in Washington, D.C.

*Richard Cleary*

# Lenten Reflection: Discerning Conscience

by Katie Roholt

On March 5, 2018, Monsignor Andrew R. Wadsworth, moderator of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, led a Lenten Reflection for the Society on discernment of conscience.

Monsignor Wadsworth began the Reflection by contrasting the Church's view of conscience and the popular definition of conscience. The modern conception of conscience teaches that morality is subjective, and thus our consciences are shaped largely by personal experiences. The Church teaches, however, that conscience is an infallible personal guide that must be

informed by eternal truths. Monsignor Wadsworth explained that one



*Monsignor Wadsworth with Katie Roholt, Richard Cleary, and then-President Maya Noronha.*

of the first ideas expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church is that humans are made in the image and likeness of God, and our consciences all express this truth. He emphasized that the human conscience, when well-

formed, follows objective moral truths. We therefore have an individual duty to form our consciences in accordance with that moral truth. Monsignor Wadsworth invoked our holy patron, Saint Thomas More, as an example of a man who strived to form his conscience in accordance with eternal truth and followed his conscience in all aspects of his life.

St. Thomas Apostle Catholic Church graciously hosted the Lenten Reflection in its parish hall, and attendees had the joy of meeting Monsignor Wadsworth's adorable canine companion, Bella.

## 'Twas the month before the Christmas...

by Peter Zolper

**Yes, our annual Christmas poetry event, co-sponsored and held at the Catholic Information Center, 13 December 2018, will soon be here.** This will be the third annual poetry reading. This annual tradition has become a beloved and much anticipated event in Washington.

In 2017, we had an exciting mix of poetry, which included original poems recited by their authors: Danielle Lussier, Joshua du Gastyne, William Newton, and Andrew Weyrich.

We also had a very dramatic reading from our own Society member John Higgins of *The Cremation of Sam McGee*. We also heard the poems of: G.K. Chesterton, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, T.S. Elliott, St. Robert Southwell, and Richard Wilbur. Our then-President, Maya Noronha, read a poem by our own St. Thomas More, entitled *A Coronation Ode to Henry VIII*. A reception followed, with a chance to see old friends and meet new friends. Be sure not to miss the event this year, whether reading or listening.

# U.S. Solicitor General Argues for More

by Richard Cleary

The Honorable Paul Clement, the 43rd Solicitor General of the United States, joined the Society for a luncheon in October 2017.



*Honorable Paul Clement and then-President Maya Noronha*

In his remarks, entitled “Arguing for A Man for All

Seasons,” Solicitor General Clement reflected on the lives of Sir Thomas More and Justice Antonin Scalia.

Clement summarized his essay, written during his freshman year at Georgetown University, on Robert Bolt’s *A Man for All Seasons*. That play, Clement recounted, shows how Sir Thomas More applied a properly-formed conscience to the question whether to take the oath of supremacy. In addition, the Solicitor General shared with the audience remembrances of Justice Scalia, himself an admirer of More.

The Society was honored to host Solicitor General Clement. With more than 90 arguments to his name, he has argued more cases before the U.S. Supreme Court than any other advocate since 2000. Several cases, such as *Hobby Lobby v. Burwell* and *Little Sisters of the Poor v. Burwell*, have presented issues of religious liberty and conscience. Before entering legal practice, Clement clerked for Judge Laurence H. Silberman of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit and Associate Justice Antonin Scalia of the U.S. Supreme Court.

## Patron’s Feast Day (from page 1)

In his homily, Archbishop Lori stressed that the great martyrs of the Church, including St. Thomas More, laid down their lives rather than violate their most sacred principles. It is this courageous witness of faith that continues to stir the minds and hearts of people today who yearn for religious freedom. The ongoing defense of religious freedom, Archbishop Lori explained, uniquely demonstrates how the clergy and laity are called each according to their specific vocations – to protect the rights of individuals to form their conscience and to protect the right of church institutions to fulfill their mission without undue interference by the state.

A longtime advocate for religious liberty issues, Archbishop Lori served as Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Religious Liberty Committee from 2011-2017. As chairman, he delivered testimony on religious freedom before the House Judiciary Committee and published *Our First, Most Cherished Liberty*, a comprehensive statement of the U.S. bishops on religious liberty



*Archbishop Lori leading Society prayer with Fr. Richard Mullins, C.O..*



# Faith is Personal, Not Private

by Will Haun

On September 12, 2018, Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for



*Archbishop Kurtz answers questions*

Religious Liberty, spoke about the centrality of religious liberty to the American public square and the search for objective truth. The event was co-sponsored by the Society

and the Catholic Information Center.

Archbishop Kurtz identified the critical role played by the church and the government together in serving the needs of all people, while emphasizing both the individual and communitarian aspects of religious liberty. The Archbishop used a few recent examples of religious liberty flashpoints—namely, the Little Sisters of the Poor's longstanding legal battle for a religious exemption to the HHS contraceptive mandate, and adoption facilities seeking to adhere to Christian and natural law teachings on marriage and family—as instances where the protection of individual conscience does not merely ensure the protection of a particular

person from an overbearing state. Rather, by preserving the soul's sovereignty, those religious individuals are able to participate in public life in ways that ensure a vibrant debate over what is true, good, and beautiful—thereby ensuring that public morality benefits from the received wisdom of those whose consciences have compelled them to reflect deeply on what is, in fact, true. In making this case for religious liberty, Archbishop Kurtz encouraged those in attendance not simply to defend religious freedom as an individual liberty, or for parochial reasons, but to build a more just society overtly committed to living and acting in accordance with what is objectively true. "Religious faith," he reminded the audience, "may be personal, but it is never private."

## Elsa Thompson: The Interview

Past-President Peter Redpath recently interviewed long-time (now former) Treasurer Elsa Thompson who provides a wonderful history of some of the people and personalities in the Society....

*You've been the constant in the Thomas More Society of America in Washington, DC. Everyone knows you and appreciates the hard work you've put into the Society over the years, but everyone's story has a beginning. When did you first hear of the Society?* It's hard to know exactly when I learned about the society since the "shrine" to St. Thomas More with Judge Markey's prayer is at my parish, St. Joseph's on

Capitol Hill. While I didn't know that Judge Markey was the founder of the Society, I used his prayer on the prie-dieu and asked for lots of favors over the years. I know I joined the Society and became active in the early 2000's thanks to a trio of smart, witty, friends who are always trying to "smarten me up." In alphabetic order they are Mary Ellen Bork, Sheila Hollis, and Regina McGranery. They are all devotees of Thomas More and have the wit, intellect, and faith to prove it.



*On September 16, 2016, EWTN News Nightly interviewed then-Society treasurer Elsa Thompson about the Thomas More Exhibit at the Saint John Paul II Shrine. Thompson told the reporter, "In this day and age, we are going to be tested. And I think we should all be praying to St. Thomas More for courage... courage under adversity."*

and its members were my own personal continuing education professors. I wanted to at least "graduate from high school."

**How did you first get involved as an officer?** Now that is a long story. It was at the end of Jim Schaller's term as president. Jim was (and I think still is) at Jackson and Campbell. Anyway, I had just taken early retirement to care for my mother who had a stroke. She was failing, and I was trying to reverse it, yes, reverse it, all on my own. One evening Jim Schaller calls me "out of the blue" and tells me that he needs me to become the treasurer of the Society. I very politely tell him that it is impossible. He very politely tells me he needs me to do this for the Society. I tell him it is impossible; I am caring for my mother. This conversation could have gone on forever, but at some point, I realized why he was such a good lawyer, and I tried to make a deal with God. I thought, if I say yes, to this nice, persuasive, never-take-no-for-an-answer lawyer, just maybe my mother will get better. And, as I like to say, I kept my end of the bargain, and while the Lord took my mother home, He helped me with my grief by bringing me so many friends in the Society.

**How have you seen the Society develop since your first event? In what ways has it changed?** We have gotten younger and larger! Archbishop Lori at our Feast Day Luncheon at St. Joseph's in June remarked how young and lively we were! As those of you present will recall, he stayed a long time, and thoroughly enjoyed our company. The spirit of the Society is alive and well in 2018. We are still inspired by Judge Markey, our founders, and our namesake Thomas More and their good will!

**Who are the most interesting speakers you've heard from over the years?** This is the hardest question of all. Where do I start? After the grueling Supreme Court confirmation process we have just witnessed, I have been thinking about Leonard Leo and his touching tribute to Judge Robert Bork after his death...or Archbishop Broglio's talk on military chaplains and conscience...or Father Paul Scalia's remembrances of his father...there are so many.

In the "olden days", we had small luncheons in addition to the big ones. We planned on 20-25 people to attend, and one I remember especially well was the scholar Clare Murphy. Dr. Murphy was a specialist of Thomas More and early Tudor humanism, Erasmus, John Fisher, and John Colet. She was a world renowned scholar and good friend and colleague of longtime member and past president Sister Anne O'Donnell. I knew her credentials; I was and still am amazed by her presence. She breezed into the luncheon with "big hair and long eye lashes"! All attention was riveted on her. I will never forget looking around the room. All eyes were fixed on this master teacher. It was simply amazing! She ended her career at age 80 at the Arizona State University Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. And, she died on the feast day of Thomas More in 2013. How about that? Where else would I have had the opportunity to hear such unique and faith filled individuals.

**What is your favorite annual the Society event?** My favorite event is our new Christmas Poetry Reading. Peter Redpath had this great idea while he was president, and it is wonderful. It is fun, and so "Moreish"---I can picture Thomas More enjoying himself and reciting a poem or two, in Latin of course!

**Where do you see the group going?** The Society is in good hands. Our board and members are principled and enthusiastic. I hope the board makes time to get to know each other and share experiences. I treasure my friends from the Society and wouldn't have gotten to know them without the luncheons and other informal events. That is one of the reasons I have always enjoyed these activities.

**How is the Society different than other groups in Washington, DC and what value do you think it brings to DC?** The Society has always been small. Having said that, as a smaller, independent organization, the Society has the flexibility to do and try different things. And we have, and we do! The Society gives its members the opportunity to learn, lead, and grow as individuals. And, we have a unique opportunity to plan events to educate the public and ourselves. It is an honorable mission.

Could I just end by saying that I wish I could have a little of the wit of Thomas More so that I could engage people with humor. I will keep trying, but in the meantime, I am thankful for the Society, our members, and the inspiration they have given me and continue to give to me.

Semper Fidelis and God Bless You.