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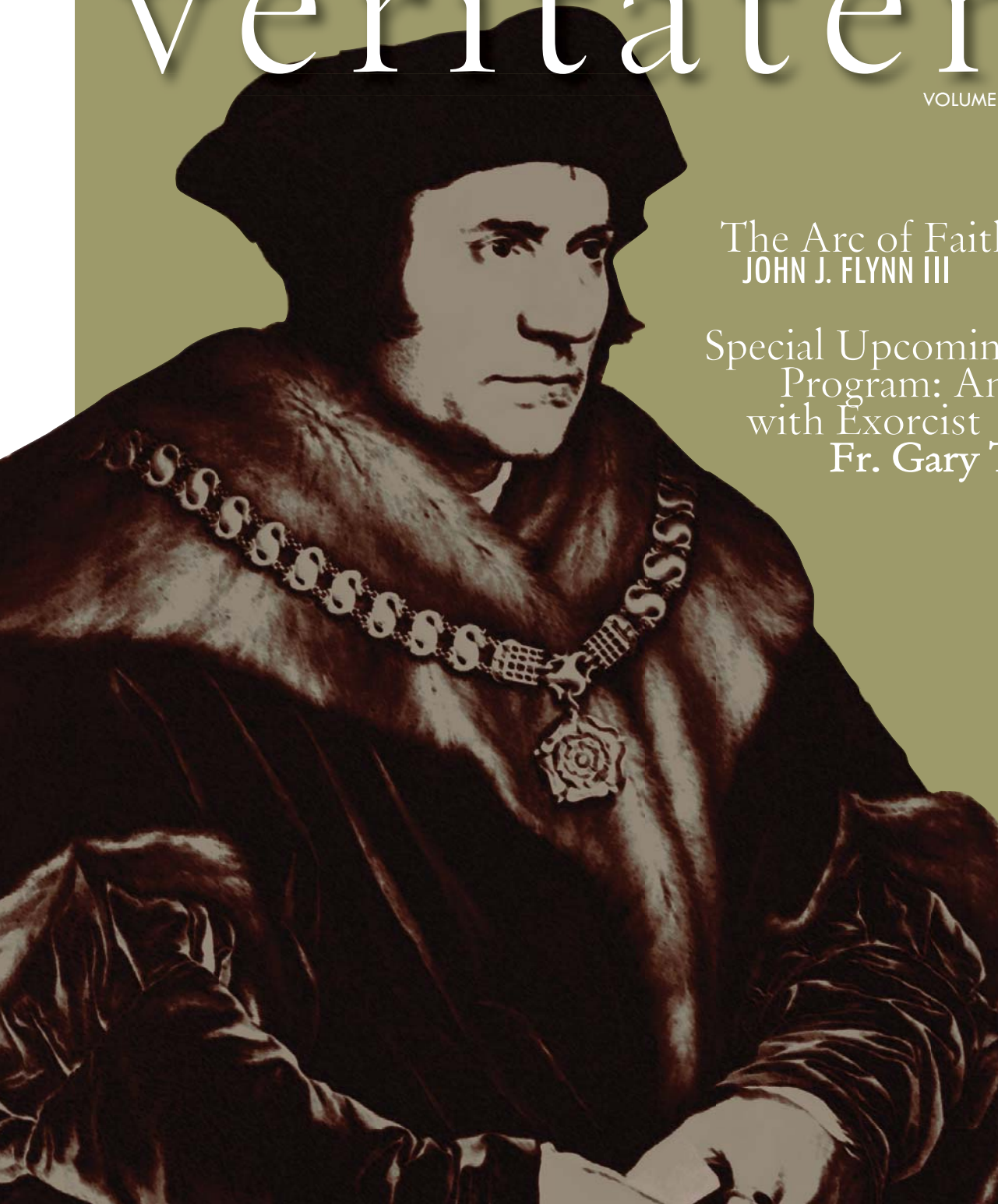
ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF ORANGE COUNTY

MAY 2011

VOLUME 16 ISSUE 5

The Arc of Faith  
JOHN J. FLYNN III

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Program: An Evening  
with Exorcist  
Fr. Gary Thomas



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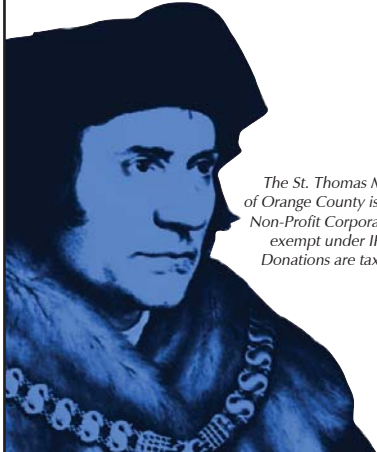
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Send inquiries to  
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The St. Thomas More Society of Orange County  
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**IDEALS OF ST. THOMAS MORE**  
The legal profession is a high calling with 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.

**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.

**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

**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

lected and appointed officials and  
members of the legal profession.

**EDITOR@STTHOMASMORE.NET**

# THE ARC OF FAITH

JOHN J. FLYNN III

At 16, I walked out of the Catholic Church, wanting to rid myself forever of its superstitions and medievalisms. I did not know then that, with my first step on the other side of the threshold, I had laid my foot in a trap. I know now who placed it.

St. Joan of Arc, whose feast day is May 30, died in 1431, burned at the stake by the English, after conviction of heresy by pro-English French churchmen. The Church reversed the conviction in 1456, though obviously too late to reverse the execution of sentence. Most saints who have had military careers retire their weapons before they begin their new careers as saints. In Joan's case, the two careers coincided.

Her story can barely be believed: An illiterate peasant claiming to be called by God, led by voices, seeking charge of the badly demoralized French armies in a campaign to eject the English from France. The campaign was ultimately successful, though the success was achieved only after Joan's death.

**JOAN WAS DOOMED, THE VICTIM OF A PRE-ORDAINED CONCLUSION THAT INFECTED HER CROSS-EXAMINATION FROM BEGINNING TO END.**

She sounded at the beginning like a badly deluded child, but managed, by an extraordinary convergence of circumstances, by sheer force of personality, and, quite possibly, by the revelation of a secret to the future Charles VII that only he knew, to persuade Charles to hand over to her the fate of her nation.

Her military career lasted about two years. She said she was sent by God, but her military successes persuaded the English that she was a witch. She was captured at Compiègne in May of 1430, and slowly ushered to trial for heresy in Rouen, France. The original trial transcripts are maintained to this day in the national archives of France. Read the transcripts for yourself (they are available in English online); you may be surprised to learn that some attempts have been made to defend the integrity of the canonical proceedings against her. It is a hopeless fantasy: Joan was doomed, the victim of a pre-ordained conclusion that infected her cross-examination from beginning to end.

I first encountered the transcripts, apparently by chance, in



1991. Because of my profession as an attorney, the transcripts made a special appeal to my curiosity. Soon, however, the beauty and power of Joan's personality, evident on every page, overtook me. I was no longer curious; I was spellbound.

In fact, it occurred to me even then that I had not encountered that kind of beauty before, and was at a loss for the right words to describe it. Though I cannot count myself among the luminaries she has vanquished, the list includes some of the hardest-headed great personalities of the late modern era: Mark Twain, G.B. Shaw and Winston Churchill, for example. St. Therese of Lisieux adored Joan, calling her "my beloved sister." My own profound attraction to Joan, however, could not compensate for the disturbance of conscience that occurred when I learned she had a great love for the Mass, which I had never liked. As a child, as scandalous as it might sound, when I prayed at Mass it was as if I were praying for the Mass to be over. Joan's love for the Mass, and my dislike of it, became a barrier.

My friendship with Joan finally grew to a point, however, where I realized the impasse would have to be broken, and the barrier dismantled: I went to confession on May 29, 1992. The next day, Saturday, May 30, 1992, Joan's feast day, I went to Mass and received Communion for the first time in nearly 25 years. Since then, I have attended Mass 3-4 times a week. To miss Mass now is to suffer. The sudden reversal is as mystifying to me as it might be to you.

I left the Catholic Church looking for a better argument. I looked in the West, and in the East, and never found one. Faith, I discovered, probably later than most, was not the product of a deduction or a syllogism. Faith is not opposed to reason, but, in the end, it is no more a deduction than is a meeting with a loved one. Faith is encounter, communion. I had left the Church in search of an argument, and was retrieved by a person.

The beauty of the saints is not their own. Theirs is a reflected or refracted beauty, and we are, in the genius of the divine plan, drawn by indirection and even misdirection, precisely because there is so often something within that must be healed before we can look directly at the Son. ♦



## MAY MEETING

### FR. SEBASTIAN WALSH, O. PRAEM: “MERE CHRISTIANITY: MARY AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL”

Please join us for our lunch meeting on Wednesday, May 18. Fr. Sebastian Walshe, O. Praem, of St. Michael’s Abbey will be our guest speaker.

Father Sebastian is a Norbertine priest ordained in 2005. He is a convert to Catholicism from Judaism via Lutheranism. He went to U.C. Irvine, Thomas Aquinas College, Catholic University and the Angelicum. He has a

Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering (UC Irvine), a Bachelor of Science in Liberal Arts from Thomas Aquinas College, a masters degree in Theology and a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the Angelicum. His doctoral thesis was entitled, “The Primacy of the Common Good as the Root of Personal Dignity in the Doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas.” ♦

## JUNE DINNER PROGRAM

### FR. GARY THOMAS, EXORCIST FOR THE DIOCESE OF SAN JOSE: “EXORCISM AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY”

Since 2006, Father Gary Thomas has served the Catholic Church as the Exorcist for the Diocese of San Jose. He is the subject of a well-known book entitled the “The Rite: The Making of a Modern Exorcist,” by Matt Baglio, which inspired a 2010 movie starring Anthony Hopkins and Colin O’Donoghue. Publishers Weekly had this to say about the book: “For anyone seeking a serious and very human examination of this fascinating subject, one that surpasses the sensational, this is absorbing and enlightening reading.”

Father Gary grew up in South San Francisco, and is a graduate of Serra High School, University of San Francisco and St. Patrick’s Seminary. He was ordained in the Diocese of San Jose in 1983, and has served as parochial vicar for St. Joseph of Cupertino, St. Nicholas and St. Thomas of Canterbury parishes. He served as Diocesan Vocation Director from 1986-1993, and Chaplain of St. Francis High School in Mountain View, from 1987-1992. He was Pastor of St. Nicholas Church (Los Altos) from 1993-2005, and now serves



as Pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Saratoga, California.

Do not miss this unique opportunity to hear Father Gary’s fascinating account of his training and experience as an exorcist, and to hear more about this important ministry of the Church. ♦

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONTH	DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
May	Wed, May 18, 12:00 p.m.	Fr. Sebastian Walshe, O. Praem of St. Michael’s Abbey on “Mere Christianity: Mary at the Heart of the Gospel”	Jilio-Ryan Hunter & Olsen 14661 Franklin, #150 (entrance at rear of building) Tustin, California
June	Wed, June 15, 6:00 p.m.	Dinner meeting program; Fr. Gary Thomas on “Exorcism and the Catholic Church in the 21st Century.” Cost: \$35 per person (\$25 judges). Reservations required by June 10. Contact Deborah Knefel: dpknefelesq@gmail.com	Jilio-Ryan Hunter & Olsen (same as above)