

## Keynote Address

Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/lawreview>

---

This Symposium is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at St. John's Law Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in St. John's Law Review by an authorized editor of St. John's Law Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [selbyc@stjohns.edu](mailto:selbyc@stjohns.edu).

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

CARDINAL ANTHONY BEVILACQUA†

My happy association with St. John's University School of Law is almost thirty years old and owes itself to the foresight of the Bishop of this Diocese, Bishop McCovero at that time, in providing me the legal education to found and administer the Diocesan Catholic Migration and Refugee Office. To be sure, I consider my time in the School of Law as a student, and later as an adjunct faculty member, to have been a tremendous learning experience. It has enriched my ministry and enabled me to assist the poor in a way that I believe is truly Vincentian.

This Diamond Jubilee affords me the opportunity to reflect on the School of Law past, present, and future, within the context of the Catholic, Vincentian and Metropolitan Mission of St. John's University. From its humble beginning at the Terminal Building at 50 Court Street in Brooklyn, to 96 Schermerhorn Street, to its present home on this campus in 1972, the School of Law has grown and developed tremendously. It is truly a testimony to the wise sponsorship of the Vincentians, the leadership of past deans and faculty, as well as the faithful support of the alumni that we can come together this morning and commemorate this magnificent milestone.

It is because of the dedication and devotion of these groups that this metropolitan law school has achieved a national and international reputation for excellence by producing generations of jurists, legal scholars and competent practitioners of the law. From a small start on Court Street has evolved a school of law numbering over 13,000 alumni worldwide. On this Diamond Jubilee, we can truthfully call our *alma mater* a house worthy of praise.

The psalmist in the Hebrew Scripture reminds us who the builder of this worthy house is. He writes "[u]nless the Lord

---

† J.C.D., *Summa Cum Laude*, Gregorian University; J.D., St. John's University School of Law; M.A., Columbia University; B.A., Cathedral College. Currently serves as Archbishop of Philadelphia.

build the house, they labor in vain who build."<sup>1</sup> This celebration calls us to reflect upon the great mission of St. John's, remembering that it is the Lord who blesses and strengthens our work as individuals and as a community. The anniversary of this house of legal education, scholarship and service brings to mind a vision of another house that preceded it and without whose foundation it could not have arisen. I speak of the House of Vincent de Paul, whose prodigious work transformed 16th Century France, making it possible for the poor to see the face of a compassionate God.<sup>2</sup> Vincent de Paul's works of organized charity, strategic alliances with the wealthy to alleviate suffering, the motivation of people from all strata of society to serve the poor, and the founding of two religious communities with innovative rules of life have brought us to this moment in the living legacy of this great saint.<sup>3</sup>

To illustrate this legacy more clearly, I would like to recall a film familiar to our subject. I speak of the classic Academy Award winning film *Monsieur Vincent*.<sup>4</sup> This timeless classic, although 50 years old, was recently remastered and re-released. Much of the film shows Vincent's heroic struggles in serving the poor but one particular scene near the film's end stands out.

Vincent is in the last years of his life and Cardinal Grazziani, an envoy from the Vatican, has come to Saint Lazare to offer commendations on behalf of the Holy Father. Cardinal Grazziani states that the Holy Father is well aware of the prejudice that Vincent and his communities had to overcome to undertake these works. He then asks what will the future say of this man who accomplished these works despite all the opposition? He received no direct answer, but instead is taken on a tour of Saint Lazare.

In room after room he sees firsthand the many works Vincent started being carried out. In one room, the elderly are being cared for. In another, orphans are being fed. In another, infants are sleeping. In another, Daughters of Charity are being instructed on how to make their first visit to the poor. Even the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Psalm 127:1.*

<sup>2</sup> *See generally* LOUIS ABELLY, 3 *THE LIFE OF THE VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD: VINCENT DE PAUL* 116 (John E. Rybolt ed. 1993) (explaining that one of the chief concerns of Vincent de Paul was service to the poor).

<sup>3</sup> *See id.* at 116-23.

<sup>4</sup> *MONSIEUR VINCENT* (Official Pictures 1947).

hallways are filled with people calmly waiting to see Vincent de Paul. Despite the immense suffering all around him, the Cardinal realizes he's immersed in a place of peace and gentleness, where the poor are treated with dignity and compassion. The Cardinal then muses few on judgment day will show such well-spent lives as Monsieur Vincent.

The rooms Cardinal Grazziani viewed in Monsieur Vincent were the foundational works of the House of Vincent that continue in this present era. They have assumed various forms and modes of expression, but they are still Vincentian by means of action or inspiration. The House of Vincent continues to heal, serve, instruct, advocate and to witness the compassion of God.

This law school is our House of Vincent. It is the legacy where we, as St. John's lawyers, find our inspiration and guidance. For today's legal educator, practitioner and student, inspiration and guidance are much sought-after commodities. Both the study and practice of law entail a great investment of one's time, talent and treasure. Studies conducted by the American Bar Association have documented the public's negative perceptions of lawyers as well as the high level of stress and low morale that exist in our profession.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, lawyers today must contend with great internal and external pressures that are very difficult to negotiate in today's world.

Is there a quick or definitive answer to the complexus of challenges the modern lawyer faces in the practice of this time-honored craft? My answer to this question is yes and no. There is no quick fix to address the many challenges members of our profession face day in and day out—no easy escape from the demands that hard work, adherence to an ethical code, or fulfilling one's fiduciary responsibilities places upon our profession. It is, however, my belief that, despite the pressures and problems of our era, St. John's lawyers can uphold the standard of excellence in legal education and practice.

To do this, you must embrace the ideals that define a St. John's legal education, and they are three. First, the practice of justice in your work; second, living out a life of faith in God and; third, serving those in need. I would like to discuss these three

---

<sup>5</sup> See Gary A Hengstler, *Vox Populi: The Public Perception of Lawyers: ABA Poll*, 79 A.B.A. J. 60 (Sept. 1993). The poll showed that "[t]he public perception seems based on strongly rooted dissatisfactions with some aspects of the way the system works and how lawyers practice their skills." *Id.*

essential elements of the study and practice of law at St. John's.

First, I will discuss the essential element of the practice of justice. When speaking of justice in the study and practice of law, one must reflect on many facets of this reality. These include justice, as it relates to the individual and the common good, the systemic context in which justice operates and the role of justice in procedural practice in a court of law. These are necessary vantage points to understand the construct of justice, but crucial as these are, there is one definitive answer that takes precedence overall. It is, quite simply, the reality that justice is a gift and duty from God.

We know that the bedrock of our legal system is the Judeo-Christian heritage. The Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus form the basis for natural and civil law as it exists in society today. The Commandments of Moses, passed on from the God of Israel, encompassed key aspects of human behavior—responsibilities due to God, oneself and the community.<sup>6</sup> Moses and the prophets who succeeded him reminded the Israelites to observe the law God had given them to ensure justice for all members of society. Justice and the law that we cherish and observe originate from one and the same font—the divine dialogue between God and the human family.

The prophet Micah describes this reality poignantly when he writes, "You have been told. O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God."<sup>7</sup> The Decalogue reached its fulfillment in the incarnation, the word made flesh in the person of Jesus. In His life and ministry, Jesus modeled obedience to the law and loving service unto death. Jesus, by the example of His life, embodies the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law. He deepens the meaning of the law to go beyond adherence to a rule of life forging it into a way of living that melds justice and faith into a self-sacrificing love for others. He is, as St. Paul says, the wisdom and justice of God.<sup>8</sup>

Every person must move from the mindset that views the law solely as adherence to rules and legal dictates to the internal

---

<sup>6</sup> See *Exodus* 20:1–17 (listing the Ten Commandments).

<sup>7</sup> *Micah* 6:8.

<sup>8</sup> See *I Corinthians* 1:30 ("It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption . . .").

desire to know the good and to do what is right. It is an arduous and difficult pathway, but as practitioners, scholars and students of the law, we have a special responsibility to help others understand its true meaning. Thus, a legal education which incorporates the divinely established tenets of justice and faith in its teaching, research, and practice provides the most enduring and effective means for members of our noble profession to serve well the individual and common good.

The second essential quality is living out a life of faith in God. Today, we are witnessing a renewed discussion of the role of faith in one's life and work. Politicians, scholars, and even celebrities have all weighed in with their opinions on the proper place of religious belief and its influence on one's professional life. Sadly, some still choose to dichotomize the role of religious faith in one's life by dividing it into private and public expressions. Much of the present day societal discord we experience can, I believe, be related to this fragmented viewpoint of how to express one's religious faith. It is only by integrating the public and private dimensions of faith into our lives that we can properly know justice and the law. Perhaps I should frame the question in this way: How often do we, as scholars, students and practitioners of the law, ponder the meaning of the great calling to which we aspire?

Reflecting on the root of the Latin word *vocare*,<sup>9</sup> to call, we can affirm law as a calling to highlight the deeper dimension of our profession. For some, this term may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable, but a calling to be a scholar, student or practitioner of the law will challenge one to see this profession as more than an occupation. In his work, *Profession As Calling*, essayist James Gustavson termed a calling as "some vision of better lives for individuals, groups and even the wider human community."<sup>10</sup> To accept this calling is to embark on a life-long journey demanding honesty with oneself, a commitment to spiritual growth and service to society.

This is the heart and soul of a St. John's legal education. For eight decades, this school of law has educated lawyers to embrace law as a vocation so that the divine dictates of justice, compassion and service would inform their knowledge and

---

<sup>9</sup> CASSELL'S NEW LATIN DICTIONARY 647 (18th 1960).

<sup>10</sup> Sheryl Ramstad Hvass, *Law and the Art of Knowing Yourself*, 21 HAMLIN L. REV. 1, 5 (1997).

practice of the law. It was not enough to graduate competent lawyers who know their craft. It was essential that these graduates be familiar with the Catholic and Vincentian Mission of St. John's so that they could embrace their profession as a way of life signifying they were part of a greater good.

In the practice of law, scholarship, judicial and public service, and generous philanthropy, St. John's alumni provide ample evidence that law is a noble and honorable profession with the power not only to inform but also to transform society. To live up to the ideals of a St. John's legal education to strive for excellence as scholars, students and practitioners, we need to engage in ongoing dialogue about our profession and our faith values.

Happily, there is a wonderful resource that exists on both national and legal levels. I speak of the conferences of the Association of Religiously Affiliated Law Schools that discuss the relationship between the practice of law and the living out of one's faith in our profession. Inspired by the Religious Lawyering Movement, this venture has drawn legal scholars from across the country to address this question: Is a lawyer's religion relevant to his or her profession and, if so, how?

This movement has gained momentum through the writings of legal scholars such as Dean Thomas Shaffer's book, *On Being a Christian Lawyer*<sup>11</sup> and continued with Yale Professor Joseph Allegretti's seminal work, *The Lawyer's Calling*.<sup>12</sup> Both authors write from their experience as Catholics and invited legal scholars of all faiths to reflect on the relationship of one's religious faith to one's practice of the law. In addition, Jewish legal scholars, such as Professors Sandy Levinson and Mordecai Biser, have written on legal education and practice in light of Jewish precepts and the Talmudic teachings.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> THOMAS SHAFFER, *ON BEING A CHRISTIAN AND A LAWYER: LAW FOR THE INNOCENT* (1981). The author notes that "[l]awyers for the rich become like the rich; lawyers for the poor become like lawyers . . . Christians are called to become poor, not rich; to become humble of spirit, not like lawyers." *Id.* at 160.

<sup>12</sup> JOSEPH G. ALLEGRETTI, *THE LAWYER'S CALLING: CHRISTIAN FAITH IN LEGAL PRACTICE* (1995).

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Sanford Levinson, *Colloquy: Identifying The Jewish Lawyer: Reflections on the Construction of Professional Identity*, 14 *CARDOZO L. REV.* 1577, 1583-1610 (1993); Mordecai Biser, *Can An Observant Jew Practice Law? A Look at Some Halakhic Problems*, XI *JEWISH LAW ANN.* 101 (1994) (discussing whether a practicing Jew can study law).

In 1996, over 50 lawyers, jurists and scholars came together to reflect on how they have reconciled their professional life with their faith life.<sup>14</sup> Truly these legal scholars and practitioners have performed a great service to our profession by raising these issues for us. A recent conference speaker noted religious lawyering has become a full-fledged movement drawing upon a sizable body of scholarship and attracting the attention of a growing number of lawyers and judges. This Association of Religiously Affiliated Law Schools has been an important voice in advancing this dialogue by co-sponsoring conferences with the American Bar Association and the National Council for Juvenile Family Court Judges.

I am happy to see that St. John's has also been involved in this national movement. As many here know, this school of law hosted the Annual Conference of the Association of Religiously Affiliated Law Schools on July 10, 2000 to discuss the relationship between religious faith and the study and practice of law. The published proceedings of this conference in the *St. John's Law Review* highlight an amazing array of issues and concerns that range from teaching justice to the relationship of law and theology.

One presentation that caught my attention was entitled *Are Religiously Affiliated Law Schools Obsolete in America?*<sup>15</sup> The author, Professor Randy Lee of Widener University School of Law, describes himself as an outsider looking in,<sup>16</sup> but his comments speak forcefully to the issue at hand. He noted that if religious law schools did not conduct themselves in a way that expressed their religious faith, they would teach their students that a person's faith need not be reflected in that person's actions.<sup>17</sup> Professor Lee observed that although Widener is nonsectarian, he is comfortable discussing, as he says himself, with students and alumni how their faith must form their practice.<sup>18</sup> He concludes with a firm challenge for religiously affiliated law schools: while remaining true to its function as a law school, it must grow in its mission of faith.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> A symposium on Faith and Law was held at Texas Tech Law School in 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Randy Lee, *Are Religiously Affiliated Law Schools Obsolete in America? The View of An Outsider Looking In*, 74 ST. JOHN'S L. REV. 655 (2000).

<sup>16</sup> See *id.* at 665.

<sup>17</sup> See *id.* at 661.

<sup>18</sup> See *id.* at 659.

<sup>19</sup> See *id.*



My dear friends, as we celebrate seventy-five years of expansion in the pursuit of excellence, I believe it is imperative that we reflect on ways to continue the integration of legal education and practice with the Catholic and Vincentian values so essential to the growth of this institution. One legal scholar has said that “[t]he continuing process of insuring the religiously affiliated law school’s faithfulness to the religious dimensions of the law school’s mission involves each member of the law school community.”<sup>20</sup>

It is important that as individuals, and as an academic community, we become aware of the resources at our disposal to integrate religious faiths with legal education and practice. The resources at our disposal are numerous. For example, the church offers a rich heritage of insights into the human family, teachings that can assist us to better understand ourselves and the world around us. In this jubilee year, Pope John Paul II, has issued a simple plea; “open wide the doors to Christ.”<sup>21</sup> The jubilee year, which traces its origin to the Hebrew Scriptures, is a time for reflection on our spiritual journey as individuals and as a pilgrim of people of God. The Church asks us to assist in the work of evangelization by leading lives of example and witness to others.

In his apostolic letter to encourage the development of an active laity, Pope John Paul II said, “Because of the one dignity flowing from Baptism, each member of the lay faithful, together with ordained ministers and men and women religious, shares responsibility for the Church’s mission.”<sup>22</sup> We bear witness to God’s justice and mercy by the manner in which we live, work and relate to others.

Another important resource to assist the integration of faith values in legal education and practice is the doctrine of social teaching provided by the Catholic Church. The great *Papal Encyclicals* of Popes Leo XIII, John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II, show the Church to be a prophetic presence for the rights of workers, immigrants, women, and the poor. These

---

<sup>20</sup> David L. Gregory, *Symposium on Religiously Affiliated Law Schools: The Bishop’s Role in the Catholic Law School*, 11 REGENT U. L. REV. 23, 24 (1998–99).

<sup>21</sup> Videotape: *Open Wide the Doors to Christ: A Personal Reflection on the Jubilee Year 2000* (United States Catholic Conference 1998).

<sup>22</sup> POPE JOHN PAUL II, *CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI: THE VOCATION AND MISSION OF THE LAY FAITHFUL IN THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD* ¶ 15 (Dec. 30, 1998), available at <http://www.cin.org/jp2ency/christif.html>.

include rights we take for granted today such as the ability of workers to organize and to demand a just wage, citizen participation in society through voting and the duty of the State to support and protect the nuclear family unit. All of these values came into the public domain through the Church's social doctrine. It is an indispensable element of catholic ethos.

The Church, as teacher, also assists institutions in responding to the challenge of integrating faith within their educational mission. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*,<sup>23</sup> which means "from the heart of the church," is a document that has evolved over the last decade and is now in its implementation stage. I believe it can assist the school of law in deepening its catholic and Vincentian roots for legal education, scholarship and practice. The goal of this document is simple. It asks every Catholic institution of higher education "to develop and maintain a plan for fulfilling its mission that communicates and develops the Catholic intellectual tradition, is of service to the Church and society, and encourages the members of the university community to grow in the practice of the faith."<sup>24</sup>

Let me assure you that, with my Brother Bishops in the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, I believe *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* will be an important means of deepening your own institutional mission. The core values *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* calls forth as foundational to the mission are the priority of the ethical over the technical, the person over things, the superiority of the spirit over matter and the linkage of knowledge to conscience.<sup>25</sup>

It is crucial that all here this morning, faculty, students, staff and alumni, reflect on these core values and their relationship to our understanding of legal education and practice.

I was pleased to see that discussion on the implementation of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* was a featured presentation at the July 10, 2000 meeting of the Association of Religiously Affiliated Law Schools hosted here at St. John's. This presentation provided insights and practical suggestions for implementation of *Ex*

---

<sup>23</sup> *EX CORDE ECCLESIAE: APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF JOHN PAUL II ON CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES* (1990).

<sup>24</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae: The Application to the United States*, Art. 5, ¶ 1 (a), at <http://www.nccbuscc.org/bishops/excorde.htm> (last visited Jan. 30, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> See *EX CORDE ECCLESIAE*, *supra* note 23, ¶ 18.

*Corde Ecclesiae*. Specific suggestions included, first, encouraging faculty to integrate Catholic values, jurisprudential concepts and justice throughout the curriculum by their teaching and research, and offering a wide array of electives in Canon Law, jurisprudence and Catholic social thought.<sup>26</sup> Second, it encouraged the joint appointment of some faculties, so that theologians and legal scholars “can engage in a creative synergy leading to an intellectually transformative activity that transcends individual faculty capabilities.”<sup>27</sup> Third, it suggested that with the growth of clinical field placement, sites should be chosen that encourage students and “faculty to give witness to the Church’s eloquent statement of the preferential option for the poor.”<sup>28</sup>

It is only through sustained and serious dialogue between academic and church leaders that the benefits of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* will be understood and implemented in a true spirit of collaboration. I know that my presence with you at this conference is a wonderful example of your desire for mutual dialogue and I thank you for this opportunity.

This morning brings together the past, the present and the future of St. John’s School of Law. We commemorate the past, celebrate the present and plan for the future so that our *alma mater* will continue its expansion in the pursuit of excellence. This Diamond Jubilee is a clarion’s call for all here, students, scholars, and practitioners, to recommit themselves to the mission of St. John’s and the highest standards of our profession.

Much has been written about the negative perceptions that our profession engenders. We all know stories of lawyers who have not upheld the ethical, the legal and at times the moral commitments they were bound to by the standards of our profession. But this Diamond Jubilee reminds us that we come from a tradition that calls us to live by values eternal, not ethereal; to place the justice of God before the judgment of colleagues; to depend on your ethical compass to guide your daily duties as carefully as you would on your Palm Pilot; to use your talents to demonstrate honesty and humility in place of

---

<sup>26</sup> See David L. Gregory & Charles J. Russo, *Proposals to Counter Continuing Resistance to the Implementation of Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 74 ST. JOHN’S L. REV. 629, 645–47 (2000).

<sup>27</sup> *Id.* at 651.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

expediency and egotism; to provide legal services that give access to voiceless, marginalized people; and to accept the challenge of integrating your faith in God within your work with clients.

The Prophet Micah reminds us again that the sum and substance of a St. John's legal education is "to do right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God."<sup>29</sup> As an astute legal scholar observed, "a great law school, like a religion, involves the transformation of human beings, is about ideas, and, ultimately, concerns the fulfillment of a redemptive ideal."<sup>30</sup> In this rapidly challenging technological era that constantly trumpets the next new thing, we can lose sight of the great ideas and eternal truths that are the foundation of our civilization.

It has been suggested that our present age has mistaken knowledge for wisdom and change for transformation. The more we can know, the wiser we will become and the more things change, the easier it will be to reinvent oneself and society. Sadly enough, we see that, even with unprecedented access to information and infusion of knowledge, great inequities still exist among members of our society. The revolutionary changes in the way we communicate, educate and work do not prevent pervasive systemic injustices that still deny equal opportunity for education, housing and healthcare to many in our midst.

By no means are we the only age to experience competing choices and conflicting values. St. Luke's gospel tells us how the ministry of John the Baptist enthused people desperately longing for meaning and direction. The crowds asked John, "What then should we do?"<sup>31</sup> John replied, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise."<sup>32</sup> John knew well the power of Jesus' message that you will find yourself by forgetting yourself and you will find Christ when you seek out his poor.

The third essential quality for the study and practice of law is serving those in need. The work of justice and the practice of faith achieve integration in the arena of service. In legal education, it is the place where theory and practice meet, where one sees the person behind the precedent and the situation underneath the statute. Service brings us into worlds we would

---

<sup>29</sup> *Micah* 6:8.

<sup>30</sup> Gregory, *supra* note 20, at 25.

<sup>31</sup> *Luke* 3:10.

<sup>32</sup> *Luke* 3:11.

never have known and to people who often have no one to take up their cause. An activist for the rights of children expressed her motivation for service in this way: As a youngster, my Father told me service is the rent we pay for our time here on earth.

Pro bono service, a time-honored tradition of our profession, is an invaluable way to assist the poor and marginalized needing legal representation. Yet, there are presently opportunities for students and faculty to engage in service that will expand their consciousness and personalize the Vincentian mission.

I have heard of the innovative and nationally recognized service-learning programs that St. John's and Niagara University have developed through the wise sponsorship of the Vincentians. I am particularly heartened that this school of law has developed the Elder Law Clinic to address the legal needs of senior citizens in Queens County. This provides a great opportunity both to learn and to serve. I am also aware of opportunities for service through external clinical programs that assist the Legal Aid Society as well as survivors of domestic violence. These programs, together with the accompanying faculty mentoring and seminars, are an invaluable asset to your legal education and your personal growth. I commend all who have assisted in their development and implementation.

As members of this House of Vincent de Paul, we have many opportunities to emulate Vincent's faith in God and service to others. One legal scholar offers a practical, yet striking insight:

[L]awyers have perhaps an unmatched power to help people bring dignity to their lives. We can help a child find a home. We can help the elderly keep their homes. We can help people find and keep a place of dignity in their lives . . . . By our everyday acts, we can make our profession less greedy, less disrespectful, less self-serving, and hypocritical. Each of us has the ability to add the sum of honesty and integrity that we believe should be maintained, and that reflects in the profession values we profess in our churches, temples, mosques and synagogues.<sup>33</sup>

My dear friends, the task of integrating one's faith into the practice of law is a life-long one. It happens not only in great moments but also in the ordinary events of life. We must

---

<sup>33</sup> N. Lee Cooper, *Symposium: The Relevance of Religion to a Lawyer's Work: An Interfaith Conference: Remark: Religion and the Lawyer*, 66 *FORDHAM L. REV.* 1083, 1086 (1998).

develop our spiritual life with the same consistency and concentration that we devote to our craft. We must be attentive to ways in which we can be of service to our colleagues and our clients. We can use our time, talents and treasure to search the voiceless and powerless in our society and gradually we will find a rhythm, a balance, and a sustaining purpose in our work.

Joseph Allegritti in his groundbreaking work, *The Lawyer's Calling*, offers an apt summary of what happens to the lawyer integrating faith values into practice. He writes:

At first glance, nothing changes; yet in a wider sense, everything changes. Work is different and has a wider sense of meaning. Personal religious commitments are inextricably woven with being a lawyer and a person. As the walls between faith and work come down, the lawyer opens up to the life-changing power of God's grace. Membership in the State or Federal Bar, on a law school faculty or in a prestigious law firm are not ends in themselves. They prepare us for the sum of our earthly existence; namely, entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Our lives work and worth are bound for eternity where we will be united with God, the source of justice and love. In the household of God, we are all his sons and daughters. Jesus tells the disciples of His vision of God's kingdom when he readies himself to leave them. He told them do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God and in me. In my Father's house, there are many dwelling places. I am indeed going to prepare a place for you, that where I am you also may be.<sup>34</sup>

This House of Vincent has changed considerably since it's humble beginnings at 50 Court Street in downtown Brooklyn. From the rooms familiar to generations of alumni on Schermerhorn Street to this, the Jamaica campus, this house has grown tremendously. These rooms have fired imaginations, sharpened intellects, challenged ideas, imbued ideals of service, and welcomed eager, aspiring lawyers when other schools would not dare allow immigrants on their rosters. Truly, this is a house worthy of praise.

The rooms in this House of Vincent must continue to open the minds and hearts of students, scholars and practitioners of the law so that the justice of God and the dignity of the human

---

<sup>34</sup> JOSEPH G. ALLEGRETTI, *THE LAWYER'S CALLING: CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LEGAL PRACTICE* (1996).

person will flourish through their lives, words and works. There are numerous people who can benefit from the efforts of those who pass through these rooms of justice, faith and service. We can make of our lives a testimony to echo what was said of Monsieur Vincent—few on judgment day will have shown such well-spent lives.

In closing, I would like to share an Irish poem that crossed my desk on a holiday card signed by a Daughter of Charity. I think it captures who we are and who we should be as members of St. John's School of Law. It reads, "We in the warm room, the fire burning bright, we must remember that out in the night there still exists the wee child of light. His little comrades, they wander about yet. We in the warm room, we must never forget."

My dear friends, in these warm rooms aglow with vigorous intellect and integrity, may we continue the Mission of the House of Vincent through the use of our gifts to bring justice, faith, and service to a waiting world.