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## Vincent R. Vasey Symposium: Foreword

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# UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON LAW REVIEW

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## VINCENT R. VASEY SYMPOSIUM

### FOREWORD

*Francis J. Conte\**

I did not have the privilege, pleasure and benefit of knowing Father Vincent R. Vasey, S.M., lawyer, teacher, theologian, and priest. From the stories of his colleagues, our faculty, knowing Father Vasey would have been not only a joy but a unique opportunity for learning. There is among the faculty of the School of Law a genuine reverence for his personal memory and an abiding respect for his intellectual gifts and for his insistence on the critical importance of values, beyond facts and events.

Vital to Father Vasey's world of learning, teaching and living, was the reality of a community of life and thought requiring a deep sensitivity to social justice, "[A]n integral part of his educational philosophy . . . [was the necessity of] a moral education that expressed itself in concern for justice."<sup>1</sup> Fittingly, the theme of the 1989 Vincent R. Vasey Symposium focuses upon moral and social values in a legal education. The keynote topic of Professor Thomas L. Shaffer of the University of Notre Dame School of Law, and his colleague Professor Robert Rodes, is "A Theology for a Catholic Law School."

Each year a different School or College at the University sponsors a symposium in Father Vasey's memory. These symposia relate to themes in one of Father Vasey's books, *Chaminade: Another Portrait*, a biography of the Founder of the Society of Mary, the religious community to which Father Vasey belonged. The symposia also have some significance for the mission of the sponsoring School or College. The lecture delivered by Professors Shaffer and Rodes, and the symposium

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1. Heft, *Introduction to Reflections on Chaminade, Another Portrait*, in REFLECTIONS ON CHAMINADE, ANOTHER PORTRAIT; VASEY SYMPOSIUM I 7 (1988).

panel's commentary by University faculty including Father James Heft, S.M., Ph.D., then Chair of Religious Studies and now Provost, Professors Susan Brenner and Richard Saphire of the law faculty, reinforce the importance of affirmative efforts to interfuse the realities of values and justice into legal education.

In addition to having a Juris Doctor degree, Father Vasey was a canon lawyer and the Procurator General of the Society of Mary in Rome from 1968 to 1974. He also received a doctorate in Patristics, the study of the great theologians and pastors of the first 700 years of Christianity, and authored a dissertation on the social teachings of St. Ambrose, the bishop of Milan and mentor of St. Augustine. His friend and brother in their shared religious community, Father James Heft, recently described the significance of this work and Father Vasey's views for law teaching this way:

His doctoral thesis in patristics was entitled, *The Social Ideas in the Works of St. Ambrose*, and included chapters on the relationship between the rich and the poor, on the limitations of property rights, and on the moral dimension of poverty. Drawing upon not only his understanding of the teachings of St. Ambrose and other doctors of the Church, but also upon an extensive grasp of the social teachings of the Catholic Church, Father Vasey presented to his law students a vision of right and wrong that always distinguished between the legal and the ethical, the expedient and the principled, the merely adequate and the truly just.<sup>2</sup>

The idea that moral and ethical values, as well as social values, should play a prominent role in law study, in ordinary law classes, is uncomfortable to some. In our rights and equality oriented society, neutral and amoral stances, may seem for many the more secure position and more protective of rights and equality. And in some cases neutrality is certainly demanded. The needs of our society and in turn the needs of our profession though demand more than merely neutrality.

While we may not aspire to be a Catholic law school, as the Law School of Notre Dame is, or even a law school with a particular religious or philosophical orientation, a genuine appreciation of the role values play in the law and society and an affirmative calling upon values drawn from religious, family and cultural heritage, is a useful, healthy vehicle for teaching law and justice to future lawyers and leaders. It is through life and the realities of community, and not codes, that we learn the meaning of true justice.

The faculty and students of the University and School of Law who participated in the symposium and colloquia led by Professors Shaffer and Rodes, found the extensive and thoughtful comments of our col-

leagues from Notre Dame very stimulating. We hope that Father Vasey, a dedicated scholar and devoted religious man, and an active member of the community of life and thought, finds this Symposium a proper tribute to him and his principled way of justice.