

RENEWING OUR CULTURE FROM THREE DIFFERENT ANGLES

A look at great Catholic apostolates that are pushing back the darkness with the light of Christ.

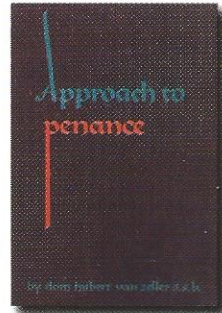
Sophia Institute Press

On a foggy day, the first Tuesday in January, I was treated to a feast of intellectual clarity and marketing savvy at Sophia Institute Press, located in a charming old converted mill in Manchester, New Hampshire. Aptly named for the Greek goddess of wisdom, Sophia publishes out-of-print classics by distinguished Catholic writers whose writings affirm Greece as the fountainhead of Western philosophy. Better yet, Sophia publishes classics that reach the modern reader who “loves wisdom” (philosophy means literally “love of wisdom”) and who seeks its underlying truth.

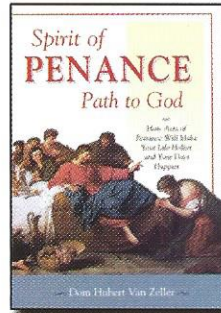
To illustrate their special formula and appeal, founder and publisher John Barger highlighted their successes in secular circles:

- Kilian J. Healy’s classic *Walking with God*, republished under the title *Awakening Your Soul to the Presence of God*, was written up in *Publishers Weekly*.
- Romano Guardini’s 1957 classic about prayer, republished under the title *The Art of Praying* and packaged in a modern new cover, attracted one thousand of One Spirit Book Club’s religiously diverse readership.
- Sophia’s eye-catching, universal-sounding version of Aquinas’ *Light of Faith*, his own simple summary of the massive *Summa Theologiae*, attracted three thousand Book of the Month Club readers.

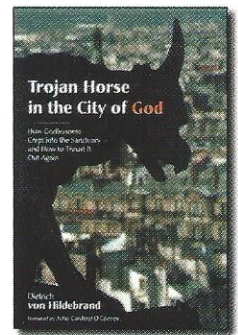
Besides such “stealth evangelization,” as Barger calls it, Sophia publishes Catholic classics aimed at cradle-to-grave Catholics. For instance, their 1999 republication of Dietrich von Hildebrand’s 1967 classic *Trojan Horse in the City of God* has a singular appeal to Catholic readers concerned about Modernism’s influence in the Church. And the 1935 classic *Winning Souls*



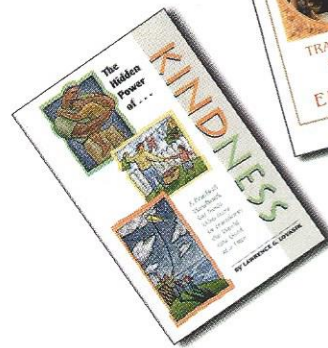
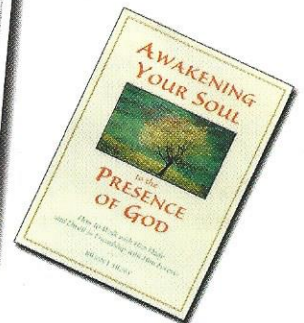
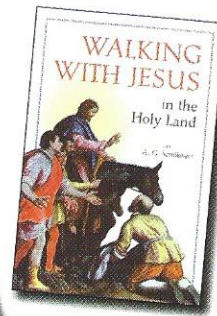
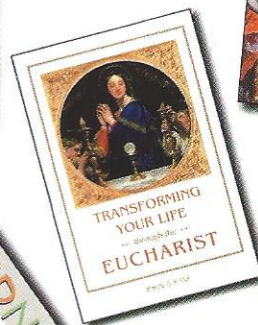
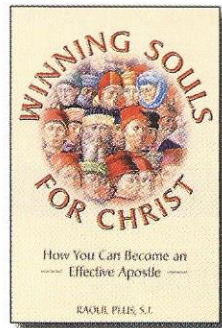
Original published edition.



Sophia Institute Press' Revised edition.



Some of the many classics Sophia Institute Press has published and “transformed.”

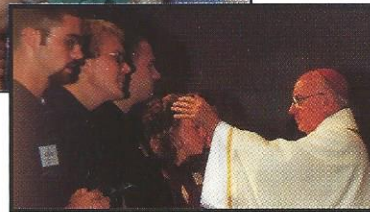
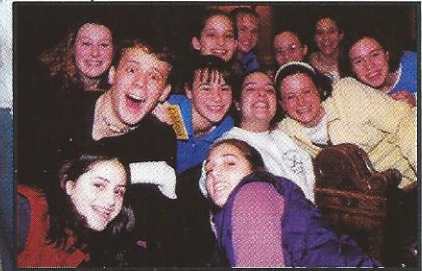
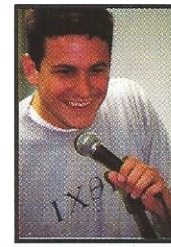
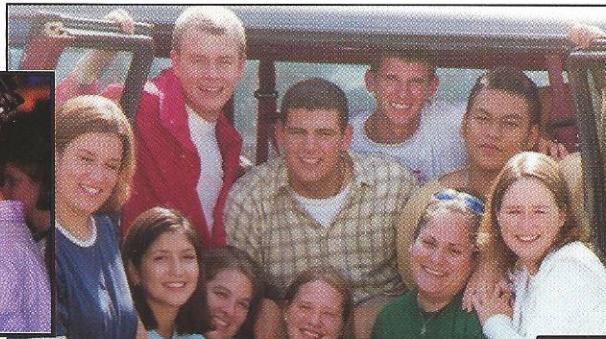
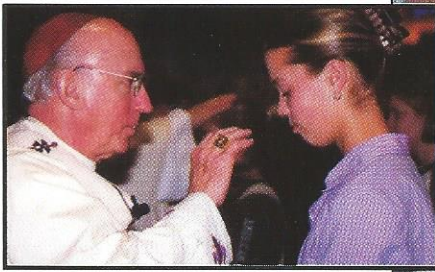


for Christ by Raoul Plus, S.J., republished in March 1999, attracts Catholics interested in evangelization.

Sophia is also attuned to cultural trends (such as malignant narcissism), evidenced by its *New Apostolate of Kindness*, launched with republication of Lawrence Lovasik’s 1962 classic *The Hidden*



John Barger, founder and publisher, left. Lorraine Bilodeau, above left, and Nora Madden, below left, staff members at Sophia Institute Press.



Power of Kindness, which includes a Kindness Pledge.

Sophia books are available at some thirteen hundred bookstores nationwide, including all the major chains. In addition, their books are available to those with limited resources or access, through programs such as Books for Priests. They even have Books for Prisoners!

The process that makes all this possible begins with trips to libraries nationwide. Generally, of every ten out-of-print Catholic books Sophia reviews, only one stands out in sparkling distinction for being clear, well-written, faithful to the Church, full of holy truth, accessible and focused on timeless and relevant issues of spirituality, ethics and devotion.

Then, the busy elves at Sophia Institute Press go to work making editorial improvements so that the reader will not, as Barger puts it, have to “fight with the text.” They correct old typographical errors, smooth clunky translations and odd expressions, identify footnotes and give the sources of Scripture quotes. They even insert new subheadings that create bite-sized sections to help the reader follow the author’s ideas and absorb them on the run, if need be.

How did Barger devise such a successful formula? Simple! It’s the same formula that worked for him when, in the late sixties, disillusioned by liberalism’s double standards, he began his conversion journey. Leaving Antioch College, he decided to enlist in the Army. After reading a Thomas Merton classic, he went to the nearest

Trappist Monastery outside Charleston, South Carolina, where he was stationed, and hung on the monastery gate.

A monk saw him and asked him what he wanted, to which he replied: “I’m looking for God.” One thing led to another, and after earning a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Dallas, he decided in 1983 to help remedy the dearth of out-of-print Catholic classics. Starting with a simple operation in his basement, soon he had a bustling publishing business — currently publishing twenty-four titles annually — to help thousands of souls one at a time find God the same way he did. Only now, instead of going to the monastery gate, these souls can start their journey at the local Barnes & Noble!

For a free Sophia Institute Press catalogue, call 800-888-9344 or visit www.sophia institute.com.

NET Evangelization Teams

“The Spirit is a movin,’ movin,’ movin’ all over the land.” That’s the tangible feeling you get after talking with Mark Berchem, executive director of NET (National Evangelization Teams) Ministries.

In the early 1980s when NET came about, the idea of “evangelization” and the invisible, yet oh-so-visible motion of the Holy Spirit was by and large not part of “Catholic thinking.” Nevertheless, explains Berchem, the Church’s mission has always included sending out missionaries, and

“with the Holy Father’s emphasis on the new evangelization,” the Church has “turned back to its evangelistic mission.” He adds: “We

all have a responsibility to share Christ,” and NET Ministries does it in splendid, Spirit-filled fashion.

NET was not a lightning bolt inspiration, but rather developed organically, growing out of the Catholic Youth Center of St. Paul, Minnesota, which experienced a spiritual renewal in the seventies. A large number of parishes from outlying dioceses would send youth to make retreats, and eventually — coincidentally at the same time Berchem arrived — started asking the Center to come to them. Under Berchem’s guidance, a group of college volunteers began going to outlying parishes, especially in South Dakota, to conduct retreats.

After two years, he got his map out and plotted an itinerary for teams to travel town to town. In January 1980, they conducted eighteen retreats in a three-week period, and soon parishes in Winona, Fargo and Sioux Falls were calling. Thus, with the Spirit movin,’ was NET Ministries born.

According to Berchem, the focus of the retreats is simple: “Challenge young Catholics to love Christ and to embrace the life of the Church.” The retreats vary in length from three hours to a full weekend, with the parish or school deciding length and format. The retreat presentations, which utilize music and skits, help participants “understand and invite them to make

a response.” The retreat ends with the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Holy Mass, or a prayer service if no priest is available.

Since 1981, an estimated twelve hundred youth have served in NET Ministries. Every year roughly eight teams, of ten to twelve volunteers each, travel on average to sixty-five dioceses in twenty-six states, reaching seventy-five thousand young people.

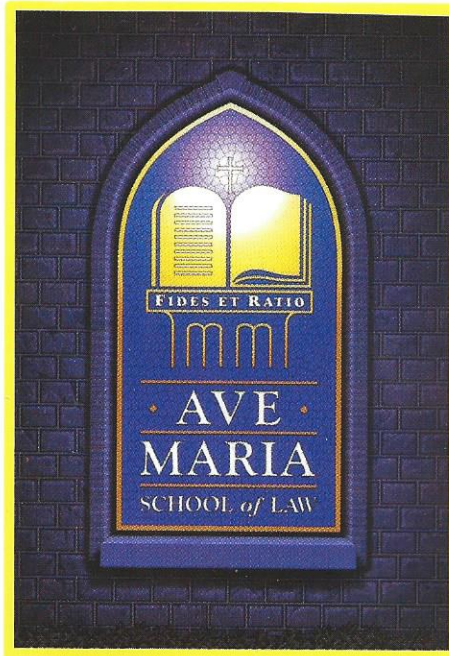
On January 1 of this year, fourteen hundred youth, including one hundred NET members (current and former), attended a joint NET-Archdiocesan Mass in St. Paul presided over by Archbishop Harry J. Flynn, who told them they are the Church’s future. In addition, Viking’s football coach Dennis Green gave a motivational talk urging them to stay on the right track, or to come home, if they had wandered; and local TV personality Kalley King Yanta spoke about the power of God’s love and forgiveness in her life.

NET appeals, Berchem notes, to the “idealistic, zealous” nature of youth who “want to change the world,” and gives them the opportunity to do so. He fervently believes “we are on the front end of a revival,” explaining, “We’re seeing young people more willing to get involved and serve.” It’s a “Catholic moment, a chance to reenergize young people to make contributions to the life, not only of the Church, but of the entire world.”

The results speak for themselves. Of the twelve hundred volunteers working with the ministry since 1981, fourteen percent have pursued the priesthood or religious life, forty of whom have made a lifetime commitment: twenty priests and twenty religious. A greater, unspecified percentage have taken marriage vows, a natural outcome by virtue of the growth in love and communication which NET fosters — the foundation of any successful marriage. The vast majority of former NET team members work in the helping professions and almost all have stayed active in the Church, either as youth ministers, catechists or teachers.

Yes, “the Spirit is a movin’” at NET Ministries.

For more information on NET Ministries call 651-450-6833.



Ave Maria School of Law

They say that every cloud has a silver lining. Catholic businessman Tom Monaghan, founder of Domino’s Pizza,

saw a dark cloud of American lawyers ungrounded in moral principles and was prompted to produce a fine silver lining: the Ave Maria School of Law in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The realization of a years-long dream, Ave Maria represents, in the words of Dean Bernard Dobranski, a “marvelous convergence” of factors, starting with the school’s blueprint, which was presented to Monaghan after he sold his holdings in Domino’s Pizza. Steve Safranek, knowing this activist layman’s concern about the quality of education, showed him a law school plan designed to produce lawyers grounded in the richness of Catholic moral teaching — a plan that mirrored exactly Monaghan’s own thinking.

Announced last April 7, 1999, Ave Maria has recruited from several first-rate law schools a talented group of well-published legal scholars and teachers who, after some soul searching, decided to trade in secure academic positions to help fulfill this dream. For instance, Dean Dobranski could have retained his tenured perch as Dean of

Catholic University's Columbus School of Law, but after Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia persuaded him of the importance of Ave Maria's mission, he decided to accept the post. Some of the others who have joined the faculty include Judge Robert H. Bork; Howard Bromberg, a Harvard-educated Catholic convert from the University of Michigan School of Law's clinical faculty; and Molly A. Murphy, who taught at Case Western Reserve and University of Detroit School of Law.

Tom Monaghan's choice of the name Ave Maria signals the school's clear intent to teach Judeo-Christian values. The name, held by every school Monaghan has founded, serves a twofold purpose. First, it immediately identifies the school as Catholic (and Marian), and second, it highlights the school's Catholic mission. Bishop Mengeling of Lansing affirmed this identity with his approval to call the school Catholic, "having determined [its] compliance with the letter and spirit of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*."

The vision will officially take flight in August 2000 when the School of Law, in a beautiful eighty-four-thousand-square-foot building on eleven acres, opens its doors to the class of 2003. Their goal is to enroll only forty students this first year — a decision, says Dobranski, shaped by "concern with quality" and consequent recognition that "small and good" is better than "big and mediocre."

In marketing itself, Ave Maria recognizes the competition from thirty-five to forty top accredited law schools. Given this reality, the prospective student will, according to its materials: (1) "enjoy being part of the school's mission"; (2) "want to take advantage of the generous scholarships" and (3) "have a pioneering spirit." The American Bar Association will make its final determination on the school's status in the summer of 2002.


As with any first-rate law school, this school's mission is to train first-class lawyers who can analyze, write, articulate and argue. The difference, says Dobranski, is that Ave Maria graduates will also understand that "at its core" law is "inextricably linked with morality."

According to the school, its three-year curriculum seeks to imbue students with a moral sense starting in the first year, when professors are encouraged to enrich "established requirements" with relevant moral

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documents. For instance, Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, on the rights and mutual responsibilities of the working class and their employers, is relevant to labor law; and medieval Jewish philosopher

Moses Maimonides' writings on the law of obligation is relevant to contracts. After the first year, the curriculum will offer a menu of "special courses" that "explore the intersection of law and morality," with a total of ten hours required for graduation.

An outstanding Board of Governors advises the School of Law and, appropriately enough, selected as the school's motto *Fides et Ratio* ("Faith and Reason"), the title of Pope John Paul II's 1998 encyclical — no doubt, the subject of a future course! 

For more information contact Ave Maria Law School at 734-930-4408.