

Professor Fr. D. Reginald Whitt Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels

Interview by Joanna Salmen

How did you get to St. Thomas?

I came here as one of the founding members of the faculty in 2001. I was recruited personally by the founding dean of the school, David Link (Link served as the dean of Notre Dame Law School for 24 years before moving to St. Thomas) and then-associate dean Patrick Schiltz (who had been a professor at Notre Dame Law School). I had taught at Notre Dame for six years before I came to St. Thomas. I knew both Link and Schiltz, and Schiltz's wife Elizabeth Schiltz (also a former Notre Dame Law School professor) very well, as I had been with them all at Notre Dame.

I came to the Twin Cities to do the baptism of the Schiltzes' youngest child. Pat brought John Garvey, the dean of Boston College Law School, and myself to downtown Minneapolis to show us the Murphy building (where the law school would begin holding classes) and then showed us the property where new law school building was going to be built. He told me about the University's ambitions for the law school, and somehow the question came up whether I would be interested in coming here. I was, because of the personalities and talents of the people setting up the school, and the ambition - to open a different kind of Catholic law school that would really put faith on front burner and try to produce lawyers who were more fully engaged in services to clients and establishing justice in society.

Had you ever been to the Twin Cities before this trip?

I had been to the Twin Cities twice before I moved here: once for a Canon Law Society of America convention back in the 90s, and then for the Schiltz baptism.

Was it a big leap for you to move to the Twin Cities and University of St. Thomas School of Law from Notre Dame Law School?

No. I'm a Dominican friar. I have lived all over the place. It is sort of like the Navy - "Join the Navy, see the world." Well, join the friars - and you will also see the world. I've lived in Rome, I taught at Villanova Law School in Philadelphia, I've lived in New

Haven, taught at Kentucky, I was at Notre Dame and many other places. I am used to packing up and moving. For me it is not such a big matter - I don't have to uproot a family - it is just me and my books. It is an easier thing for me to make happen than it is for most people - although I had to convince my religious superiors to give me permission to do so. But it was not hard to convince them at all actually, because it was such an exciting prospect.

What do you enjoy about teaching?

I love law students. They are great: You have a room full of highly intelligent, highly motivated people who are eager to learn something they know they don't know but they want to learn it and understand it. And most of them want to understand it so they can be of assistance to someone else, not just for their own egos. You don't find that in other professions. You don't even find that in other schools. The law school classroom is the most exciting place to be in any university. I love teaching the law.

What areas of law interest you?

I am a canon lawyer, in addition to having the JD. A good deal of my research involves the law of the Catholic Church. My principle areas of study are structures within the Catholic Church (the parish, the dioceses) and liturgical law. I also do work in the law of Church property and the canon law of marriage. Next semester I'm offering a course, Introduction to Canon Law, and the semester after that, I hope to teach a course on the canon law of marriage.

What would you do if you were not a law professor?

Well, I am a Catholic

priest! But I don't know... I have been teaching law since 1988. My goodness, that is 20 years, isn't it? Wooo!

During that time I took off to go to school myself, in Rome. Then I was at Catholic University from 1990 to 1995 to get my degrees in canon law. Then I went to Notre Dame, and then I came here in 2001. Then I was the president of the Dominican school of theology in Washington for four years; but over a span of 20 years, I've mostly been teaching law.

When the day comes to retire, I'm not sure what I will do. Before I taught I did parish work, so I know how to do that. I've also worked as an itinerant preacher. But it is a delight to be in the law school classroom, and I wouldn't voluntary trade that for a parish.

