

**Doing Right in a Shrinking World:
Religion vs. Business**

Brother Louis DeThomasis, FSC

Here are some very, very famous words, which have been proclaimed from the Broadway stage to the eyes, ears, sensibilities and utter delight of so many of us for decades.

**Here they are Are you ready? Silence, please
(You make a gesture as if to begin, and then)**

Some of you know me. Could you ever imagine me doing a Broadway musical? I wonder, could there be any Broadway talent agents here among the National Association of Treasurers of Religious Institutions? If so, please come to the front.

So . . . those tender words from that beloved Broadway musical:

**Money money money-
money money money
Money money money-
money money money**

How's that? I know it's a bit uncomfortable for a standing ovation, so don't worry. The point is, of course, you recognize these words, right? Not only from your daily professional lives, but from Kander and Ebb's wonderful musical, Cabaret. That delightful tune also contains these words:

**Money makes the world go around,
The world go around,
The world go around,
Money makes the world go around,
Of that we can be sure.**

With this in mind, let me tell you a story that might have some relevance to what we are dealing with in our life and in our work. I have not revealed this to anyone, really. Some might be skeptical; some

might think I have had a breakdown. But I will share it with you, my good friends in finance.

I had a vision. An angel came to me. I do not know the angel's name. I was too flustered to ask. And I do not even know if the angel was a she or a he. I could digress on this point, but I won't.

Anyway, the angel appeared to me as I was dining. Actually, that evening, I was eating angel hair pasta and angel food cake for dessert, with a glass or two of Fra Angelico as an after dinner drink. Could there be a connection? I was eating whole wheat pasta, and the angel had quite a tan . . . but I digress. The angel appeared to me and said, "Louie, God has a gift for you." Well, I was stunned. For me? God? But I knew I had already received so many gifts. I almost thought, "Well, one more couldn't hurt."

As I was pondering, the angel said, "You can choose from two gifts: All of the money you want, or all of the wisdom there is in the entire world. Well, even before I could enunciate my obvious choice, the angel disappeared.

Shortly after that, I ran into old Brother Socrates Aristotle Aquinas of Mary, a very wise man. I told him what had happened and that I did not get to tell the angel my choice. Brother sympathized with my situation, and encouraged me to seek the angel and tell my choice immediately. (Brother also said he didn't think the angel was either male or female, which I thought was very modern.)

So, the very next day, I caught a glimpse of the angel again, and I quickly announced my choice. And the angel quickly left, without a moment of discussion. Shortly thereafter, I again encountered Brother

Socrates Aristotle Aquinas of Mary – whose family name I discovered was Wiseman. Of course, he asked about things and I told him I had seen the angel and proudly and clearly announced my choice.

“And what was your choice?” Brother asked with smiling inquisitiveness.

“Well, Brother Socrates Aristotle Aquinas of Mary, I think you will be happy that I chose . . . wisdom.”

He was very impressed, and congratulated me heartily (yet with an obvious skepticism), finally saying, “Brother Louis, please demonstrate for me that magnificent virtue, that virtue we all desire: Wisdom. Say something now that will clearly show me you have the great gift of wisdom.”

“Well,” I said wisely, “I should have taken the money!”

That is so true, isn't it? Shockingly, regrettably, utterly true! How simple! How absolutely, uncompromisingly simple. Dollars, pounds, francs, rubles, pesos, you name it. In its absence or in its excess, it is the lifeblood, the air, the gravity, the propulsion, the incredible sine non qua of the universe. People, organizations, and countries all like to have lots of it. We like, yes, but we need it, personally, professionally. The lack of it can be a problem, personally, professionally, globally.

And what has become profoundly true about money, at least in what we could call “modern civilizations,” is that you don't have to have it to have it. The products of wealth and prosperity are available to a huge percentage of our societies, particularly through the good old credit card. We have been Visa-d and Mastercarded, Discovered, and American Expressed. Perhaps not to death, but often to despair.

Money, money, money, money. We can spend it as if we had it, at least for a time. And for 18% or more interest. But this is good, isn't it? And it is all so simple.

Yes, simple. Right, simple. We, whose profession, and perhaps passion, causes us to deal with, worry about, care for . . . well, I could go on with little descriptors, even to the need to manipulate money, which sounds "if-y," but reflects reality.

Simple, like traveling to the stars. Simple, like understanding Thomas Aquinas. Maybe not.

On January 31 of this year, Pope Benedict XVI said some simple things that pointed out that, not only can simple things be complicated, but even more than complicated. He was speaking to a general audience in the Vatican's audience hall, talking about the Church's early times, and he set aside his text to drive home a point: The apostles and first disciples weren't perfect, he said, but had their own arguments and controversies.

"This appears very consoling to me," Pope Benedict said, "because we see that the saints did not drop as saints from heaven. They were men and women like us with problems and even sins."

The audience of about 6,000 applauded enthusiastically, more so than what might be expected. The Pope paused, looked up, and smiled awkwardly. It seemed that the audience responded very positively to the simple idea that saints could also be sinners. Of course, as we can easily believe, journalists were among those eager to see the official text of the Pope's simple remarks.

Well, when the text was released a few hours later, it looked somewhat different than it had sounded. Gone was the line about the

sins of the saints. Instead, the official version quoted the Pope as saying that the early saints “were men like us with problems that were complicated.”

So, we move from the saints leading lives that were in some ways sinful, like all of ours, to lives that had problems that were complicated. The Pope had spoken in Italian, and the official Vatican explanation was that the Pope had said complicati, which means “complicated.” It sounded like con peccati, which means “with sins.”

You might like to know that a close listening to a tape recording of the Pope’s comments showed that he was actually speaking about “sins;,” con peccati.

What an interesting distinction: complicated versus sinful!

It is complicated enough, isn’t it, that each of us, as individuals living in the world, must deal with money. Of course, when working with money becomes part or all of one’s profession, or, oh-my-God, one’s vocation, we popularly don’t say that we deal with “money,” but with “finance.” Of course, every one believes they understand money, but when you have to call it finance, it is rather more complicated.

Yes, it is rather more complicated, isn’t it? Or is it . . . must it be . . . not just “complicati,” but, saints preserve us, “con peccati,” sinful!

We in finance do have a problem, not in terms of our own behavior, of course. My sources tell me that the last sin committed by anyone in this room was in 1953, when someone squeezed a buffalo head nickel so hard . . . well, never mind. But your jobs, your life work can be . . . is very complicated.

Your mission “to meet the current and emerging stewardship needs of all religious institutes throughout the United States,” speaks to

your most noble purposes, to your most intricate work, to the vibrancy of your concern for your religious and lay colleagues, and for the myriad benefactors of the works of your religious orders. You are people of finance, dealing with dollars and debts, with receipts and repayments, with interest and principle. And, yes, you know that it is a work that is complicated, and for so many, it appears to be a work, necessarily, *con peccati*.

I could go with clever little pairs, but there is one pair of concepts that is far more meaningful here with NATRI than it is in most meetings of treasurers of other kinds of organizations.

You . . . we . . . are people of Faith AND Finance. Many of us are vowed members of religious organizations, and many are lay people who have devoted their skills and their professional lives to the work of religious organizations. We share in the faith of our communities and our Church; we hold major responsibilities in the financial life of our religious institutes. I must tell you that I have given hundreds of speeches in my career, but have never had an audience for whom my concern for the intimate relationship between faith and finance has been more apt and vital.

I am committed to the promotion of an understanding of this most mystical – yes, mystical – and most practical of paired concepts. But “concepts” do not say enough. Separately, faith and finance are world-molding, earth-shaking principles. As a union of concepts into metaphor and more: into virtually fissionable payloads of philosophical, motivational, spiritual, and even, I believe, physical energy, they

But wait. I should not say “concepts” in the plural when referring to Faith and Finance. Faith and Finance is a single concept, and we

must not think of two words joined by a conjunction, but as One Idea, One Way of Life, One Way of Doing Business. Because it is not 50% Faith and 50% finance. It is 100% of each. That really means that with understanding and living the principles of Faith and Finance, we can operate at 200%, not a shabby 100%! And we had better believe that as Christians in our new globalized society

THE SACRED AND THE PROFANE

Truthfully, don't we get a little uneasy when we put together what appear to be two disparate and distinct worlds: faith and finance? After all, our life of faith in our church is about holiness, inspiration and God-centeredness. How can we dare even utter the phrases like "financial matters," "money concerns," or "material resources" in the same breath as we talk of the holy, the sacramental, the spiritual? Faith and Finance. Indeed, are they not in opposition to each other? Haven't we been taught that all our lives?

Faith and Finance. Are they not worlds apart and in no way even related to each other?

Faith and Finance. Are they not the sacred and the profane; one fostering the God of love; the other representing the world of secular greed?

Our church and our religious institutions are not businesses. (Yet, don't we have many business-like fiduciary obligations to be stewards – good, ethical stewards – of the material resources entrusted to our care?)

Our church and our religious institutions are not social service organizations. (Yet, don't we strive at our very core to have a "preferential option for the poor"?)

Our church and our religious institutions are not philanthropic foundations. (Yet, don't we try to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and care for the sick?)

We are church. We are not an economic enterprise. (Yet, who among us needs to be reminded of the growing financial challenges precipitated by escalating costs, downward pressures on income, and a proliferation of costly litigation against the church?)

In the thoughts and Ideas that I will share with you today, I will be asking you to consider that you look at your positions as Treasurers of Religious Institutions with a more vital and expanded role than that with which you may be comfortable. (Yet, I know "putting more on your plate" and having more to do is certainly not what you want to hear.) Your positions are unique because you deal with both a life of faith and a life of finance; Faith and Finance, a pair of agendas, certainly complicati, and, perhaps, con peccati.

Perhaps you think I am here today to ask you to change. To change what you do, or how something is done. Not at all. I am not here to talk about "change," I am here to talk about "Transformation." Simply stated, Change means doing things differently, and trying to do them perhaps even better. Ah, but Transformation means "doing what we have never even thought of before, and perhaps no one has thought of before. Transformation, real transformation, is getting even God to say, "Why didn't I think of that?"

Perhaps you think I am here today to tell you, to give you a list of transformational things you can do in your work to change the future of your institution. I am afraid not. Transformation is difficult work because it takes time, dialogue, sharing, listening, trusting and

collaboration; attributes all of which are in need of, shall we say, enhancement in our current institutional church dynamics; dynamics that must be demonstrably inclusive, not hierarchically exclusive.. Or, that transformational inspiration could come in an instant . . . but probably not. When we are working at creating our own future, which is another way of looking at transformation, it is a difficult and inclusive task. De facto we are part of the institutional church and as such religious institutions are not “afterthoughts” or “incidental appendages” of the institutional church. We are, indeed, a vital, relevant and faith-filled part of our institutional church.

So if my presentation today, which speaks in the same breath—faith and finance-- makes you feel uneasy; or, makes you think I am not realistic; or, makes you wonder if I really don't understand; or, perhaps with your sensitivity and kindness makes you write me off as a bit naive; then, you indeed do understand me! What in fact I am exploring with you today is an unequivocal message that a new understanding, a new vision and nothing less than a new imagination, a full transformation, is needed within our church and in our religious institutions in this third millennium of Jesus Christ in our world today. And, that vision is for a strengthening of the church through a collaboration – a collaboration of faith and finance in a different way than, perhaps, you may expect. Let us explore together some aspects that lead me to this assertion.

FROM INTEGRATION TO FRAGMENTATION

During Jesus' time on earth, when the Word was made Flesh, the incarnate Son of God was born, He lived and died within and among the Hebrew people, God's chosen people.

For the Hebrews, faith and finance were not fragmented into rigid and distinctive polarities as we have come to view them in our traditional Hellenistic philosophical mind-set of dualism. Consider that Jesus, habitually and with ease, grasped and shared with his followers, analogies from the economic world around him. However, this integration often eludes us today because when we read Scripture a "poetic mist" hovers over these sacred writings. In essence the worlds are "disguised" because the entrepreneurs of Jesus' times were, in fact, the shepherds, the fishermen, the sowers of seeds. Today, perhaps we would think it irreverent to attempt to talk about the holy word of God using stories about stock brokers, lawyers, computer programmers, plumbers, or forgive me Treasurers of Religious Institutions! It might sound a bit complicati for us, yet, that is exactly what Jesus was doing.

Consider also that for Paul, in Holy Scripture, the inner secret of salvation was talked about in terms of the commercial practice of his day whereby notes of indebtedness were torn in half upon repayment. The marketplace jargon of his time, "redemption," now has evolved into a deeply religious meaning for us. Or, review Luke's Acts (19th Chapter) in which he relates the riots occasioned by Paul's preaching. It is interesting to note (vs. 23-28) that Luke clearly attributes the cause of that violence to the bad effect this new faith had on the lucrative idol-making business of the time.

Also, review your church history when in the eleventh century we observe a sudden rise in new monastic orders. The birth of these new monasteries is incomprehensible without surveying the financial changes and transformation in feudal economics caused by the paradigm shift in agriculture at that time. Then take another look at the

Reformation. Of course, we see the obviously and deeply embedded religious reform going on. But, do we sufficiently scrutinize the less obvious yet concurrent economic circumstances and class struggles that significantly engulfed this religious reformation?

This, then, is the first and foundational observation that I offer you to consider for a new vision for a strengthening of the church. A new imagination is needed in order to "re-vision" a collaboration for faith and finance in our church and in our religious institutions today.

This new imagination I call for is actually reverting back to our own past. It's a radical "re-visioning" in the sense that we go back to our roots and **THINK as Jesus did; **UNDERSTAND** as Jesus did; **IMAGINE** as Jesus did so that we will be able to **TEACH** as Jesus did. And this new imagination will necessarily mean that the current hierarchical and clerical infrastructure which many see as "church" today will transform into a more horizontal interfacing structure in which men and women, clerics and religious, ordained and lay people, will, de facto, work together, with each respected as equal partners and associates in our church. A church that is truly the people of god, living out their lives and Faith and Finance in the globalized, yet more unified, secular society of the twenty first century.**

IF YOU DON'T SEE IT, YOU WILL NOT HAVE IT.

You certainly have a right to ask me is it really that important that we develop this new, more complementary and more integrated, collaborative sense for faith and finance in our Catholic Church today? Well, consider the insight of the Pulitzer Prize writer Toni Morrison in her popular and wonderful novel, *Beloved*. In this book she creates a marvelous story around a slave woman named Baby Suggs. On

Sundays, Baby Suggs secretly took her community of slaves deep into the woods so that the "master" would not see them worship together. And it was there, in her "open-air cathedral," that she would preach to her companion slaves whose lives were filled with oppression, misery, and poverty so ghastly that we really have trouble imagining how she could entice such a broken people to listen to her preach about a loving, Christian God. But, Baby Suggs did just that. Preacher Suggs did not proclaim to her congregation the usual and common exhortations about fire and brimstone, sin and terror, or oppression and hardship. Indeed, these broken, enslaved people lived that horror every day.

Instead, Baby Suggs preached to them about the true, core, joy-filled message of Jesus Christ. She presented the "Good News" to those slaves when she would tell them that the only grace they could have is the grace that they could imagine. If they could not see it, then they would not have it. Indeed, Jesus Christ and his church can only remain vital, relevant and true to the extent that we have the grace to see, to imagine Jesus in this world: in the circumstances that we are in; at this time in which we live; and, within the religious, social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances extant. Faith and Finance have never before been more in need of a new visioning of collaboration than in today's world. Change is not nearly enough. We – the world – need to transform. We, in our roles, need to transform, do new things.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we know this reality and we are seeing it more and more played out in our world today. A world where over two billion people live, barely live, on the equivalent of about a dollar a day. People who cannot live in dignity, do not accept degradation; rather they cast a shadow over our globe; and they will fight for decency to the

death-theirs and ours. And, though we are all aware and hear, read and see complicated, complex and contorted explanations by the leading experts, the popular pundits or the geo-political experts, be certain of this. When people's economic circumstances reek with the hopelessness of injustice and profound despair, then inevitably their faith changes into a twisted, dynamic, justifying terror. Simply yet starkly stated -this is the shadow of global terrorism. This is the shadow cast when faith and finance are not working in collaboration. So again, I stress my first conclusion-a new imagination is needed in order to "re-vision" a collaboration of faith and finance in our church today. Perhaps we had all better stop imagining the separation of the sacred and the profane, – this world and the other world – and see that faith in God's kingdom on earth, is not only attained by our nice sounding prayer exhortation, but, rather, will be realized when we bring the full, powerful economic forces of the Church, and make real, concrete decisions that effect our "preferential option for the poor."

GLOBALIZATION

Let me now ask you to consider a second point-the concept of globalization. For many hundreds upon hundreds of years, humanity saw, envisioned, imagined, believed in a world that was flat. But then came the astute and the scientific observers of the stars and for hundreds of years we saw, envisioned, imagined and believed in a world that is round: We proved it. The brave circumnavigated the globe. End. Story finished.

Oh, but now, a new revelation! It turns out that we were wrong when we decided that it was wrong to conclude that the earth was flat. Tom Friedman set us straight and corrected our global vision: The

World is Flat, after all! Or, as he told us, globalization has accidentally made Beijing, Bangalore and Bethesda next door neighbors. The world is now flat. I'm confused. And you know I think God is confused also because He really thought He made a round world. Indeed, we are compelled to imagine a new world that has never existed before. Remember, Baby Suggs: the only grace we will have is the grace that we can imagine. If we do not see it, we will not have it.

Today, geographic distance is dead. Global capital is connected instantaneously and cash flows even faster. Workers in Detroit work with their back office colleagues in Dublin. But, more importantly and posing huge challenges in our world today, because of our cultural, social and political connectedness there is no longer the sharp, distinctive separation between world economic life and global religious life. Didn't 9-11 demonstrate that only too clearly? I believe a better image in viewing our new globalization, rather than seeing the world as flat, is that of a shrinking world. A shrinking world making faith and finance come closer together than was ever before imagined on this earth.

As we know, today's shrinking world is occasioned by this compression of distance and communication through technology. For those who can see, there is a hard to explain, inextricably joined symbiotic relationship and complexity never known before to humanity, or its political organizations, or its religions (and we thought the Holy Trinity was complicati). It is NOT business as usual for a head of state, a CEO of a global corporation, a director of a non-governmental organization, or for religious leaders. NO, it is NOT business as usual! Nothing short of the grace of a new imagination will make us see any

semblance of order, harmony and peace from the apparent chaos accompanying this kaleidoscopic array of interactive machinations inherent in the globalization of a shrinking world. This then is my second observation: globalization with its complexity and sophisticated interactions in the political, economic and religious realms sets the stage for chaos as never before experienced in our shrinking world.

IDEOLOGICAL RELIGIOUS TERRORISTS

Now I ask you to join me in looking into my next point. Consider the important research of Philip Jenkins, a professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, in his book published five years ago *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Jenkins predicts that by 2050 almost 20 of the 25 largest nations on the globe will be predominantly or entirely Christian or Muslim, with at least 10 of these nations being sites of intense conflict. In fact, he believes that such near-future conflict will make the bloody religious wars of the 16th century look like calisthenics. He also points out that sub-Saharan Africa will have surpassed Europe as the leading center of Christianity. In addition, Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, Nigeria, Congo and the United States will have more than 600 million Christians. But, our imagination must be revamped lest we make the mistake of assuming that growth will represent a strengthening of the type of Christianity WE, and our institutional church, presently practice and with which WE are comfortable. The greatest wave of future Christian growth in these areas will be fundamentalist-Pentecostal Christianity: emphasizing the power of personal faith, biblical literalism and apocalyptic scenarios. In Jenkins' recently released book *The New Faces of Christianity*, we see that if current

trends continue only one in five of the three billion Christians by 2050 will come from the United States or Europe. And it will be, for the most part, the Christians in the southern hemisphere who will adopt this more literalistic, scriptural approach to Christianity.

So what do you think about the future of the Christianity that WE are now part of - the Roman Catholic Church in the United States or in the Western hemisphere for that matter?

Therefore, for my next point, I would ask you to consider once again the necessity for a collaboration of faith and finance, but from a different view point. We can rationally see with certainty that the true, basic religious tenets of religions-Christianity, Judaism and Islam-are not the cause of the problems. However, religions are being distorted in a grotesque and deliberate way to cause terror and wars. The dangerously fringe fundamentalist minorities in all our religions are speaking radically and violently to their followers. Yet, underlying even these most powerful motivations, are economic inequities.

Faith and Finance, once again! Ours is a shrinking world society in which economic and ideological forces of the extreme fringes of world religions and churches-not the true spiritual forces of those religions and churches--quantitatively and qualitatively complicate matters for the Magisterium and for all of us in the Catholic Church today and all peoples of good will, who earnestly and faithfully attempt to address and remedy the problems of global injustice and poverty. Our traditional solutions that we embraced in a much different world of the past will not be responsive in helping us realize a "preferential option for the poor" today.

NEVER IDEOLOGY

For my final observation, permit me to be somewhat indelicate and suggest this: there are ideologues, i.e., ideological superstitious and reactionary fundamentalist forces, within all world religions and all churches in our shrinking world. We are not going to avoid devastating consequences, if we permit this and tolerate ideological religious terrorism in any religion.

A story may help us explain the complexity, deviousness and insidious mind-twisting machinations perpetrated by ideologues causing a twisting of the truth. It has been said of the nineteenth-century French short story writer Guy de Maupassant that each day he ate his lunch atop the Eiffel Tower. Though he disliked the food served there, he abhorred even more the site of this grotesque structure seen from every point and every restaurant in Paris at that time. The truth was that he took lunch at the Eiffel Tower because it was, indeed, the only restaurant in Paris where he could eat without experiencing the pain of looking at it. It was certainly a conscious twisting of the truth from the perspective of de Maupassant's gourmand sensitivities for the "spin doctors" of his time to suggest it was an endorsement of the fine "haute cuisine" of the restaurant that brought de Maupassant each day for lunch there.

And there is another way of thinking about Guy's inclinations. Given the almost constant attention by the mass media, especially television, to the poverty and starving in the world, don't we have the complicated, nigh onto sinful privilege of sitting atop our Eiffel Tower observatory, and what? Seeing so much? Doing ever so little?

Doing nothing? Oh, it is complicated? Is it . . . could it be sinful? That we do so little?

Consider that one of the most urgent social needs in our prosperous country today is to make health care accessible to millions more people. Yet, government, politicians, corporations, citizens – you and me – have still not made even basic health care available to all. Perhaps, then, it is we in the church who can influence economic venues within our structures and organizations to come together and create and innovate to at least a degree that will make better health care available to our very own employees. Maybe we are the ones who can demonstrate new ways that have not yet been thought of, or – if I may speak boldly – that we have not yet had the act of will and faith in our ingenuity to get us to put our money where our mouths are.

Doing right in this regard is truly a “preferential option for the poor,” and not just a “sound bite” or clever sounding homily.

If we do not see it, we will not have it!

Or consider this: millions of Americans do not make enough money to raise their families, even when both spouses work, and both hold down two jobs! Again, we, as church, must look to ourselves and courageously better our wage scales for our employees. Can we continue to ask our young, faithful, married families to be open to God’s grace to bring more children into the world, if we don’t come together and innovate to effect higher wages for our very own employees?

Doing right in this regard is truly a “preferential option for the poor,” and not just a “sound bite” or clever sounding homily.

If we do not see it, we will not have it!

But ponder for a moment . . . just what is your power and influence in your professional positions? Certainly, you are not The Bosses, you are not ordinarily the people who decide exactly where All of your institution's funds go. But you can speak up to the Boss or Bosses, can't you? Here is another possibility.

While our presumption might be that, those of us in religious orders will be taken care of in our senior years by our religious orders, we must have a deep and active concern for our lay employees who will, someday, be in a position where Social Security must be teamed up with other – and it needs to be rather significant other retirement income.

How good are our programs for retirees? How much are our institutions investing in it? What can we do to make those years, those decades, after employee retirement less worrisome, less demeaning, more peaceful for those who have served us for many, many years. Doing right in this regard is truly a “preferential option for the poor,” and not just a “sound bite” or clever sounding homily.

If we do not see it, we will not have it!

A conscious twisting of the truth – or distortion by limiting and excluding – that is the end result of ideology, whether a conscious, sought-after ideology, or one that grows within us and assumes control somewhere along the line. Or, as it has been said in the spirit of our de Maupassant story-faith is to ideology as fine dining is to gluttony.

We understand ideology to be a systematic body of concepts about human life, culture or religion, and the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a view of reality. To intellectuals, ideology has held a powerful and influential appeal which can be traced back to the efforts of the French "enlightenment" to grasp human nature as a set of

mechanical laws. Kenneth Minogue in his book, Alien Powers: The Pure Theory of Ideology, warns of the ideologue's tendency to always lean toward certainty. Minogue places ideology in the perspective of a perversion of reason. It becomes an intellectual chameleon, since it appears sometimes as a science, as a philosophy, or even as a religion. Ideology becomes a great enemy to the Good News of Jesus Christ, since it casts a shadow over the faith-filled and graced enriched human imagination by offering neat ideological formulae under the guise of "total truth"-or more precisely, and honestly, "my truth" only.

Too often, some in our world religions, the ones who always seem to get the most media coverage, twist the truth about peace and love-whether Hindu or Buddhist, Orthodox Jew or Muslim, Protestant or Roman Catholic-by betraying the truth and beauty of their true inspired core values. The Roman Catholic Church's continuous proclamation of a "preferential option for the poor" stands as our Eiffel Tower-a tower though of beauty and brilliance-that can light up and remove the shadows of vast and overwhelming human needs from poverty, oppression and terrorism. Faith and Finance-that is our tower and it is up to us to go to it and actualize its power for the poor and vulnerable of this shrinking world. Let us not be like Guy de Maupassant who went to his tower only as a ruse!

CONCLUSION

My concluding thought for you, and to all those involved in the stewardship and management of our church's finances, is to impress upon you the unique force that you can be in the shrinking world that I have attempted to survey in my observations:

1. A new imagination is needed in order to re-vision a collaboration for faith and finance is our Church today.

2. Globalization with its complexity and sophisticated interactions in the political, economic and religious realms sets the stage for chaos as never before experienced in our shrinking world.

3. Religion is being used in a grotesque and deliberate way to cause terror and wars.

4. Ideology is the destructive force in our shrinking world.

If these observations are even partially correct then our church must effectively engage this new shrinking world with the same core, never-changing truths of Jesus' Gospel, but with new, different, changing, relevant and vital actions that we never before even imagined. If we do not see it, we will not have it. (OR If we do not see it, we may be part of the problem!)

Us, it is us, who must imagine our roles as Treasurers of Religious Institutions in a much different way than ever before. We can no longer be the ones who only take care of the banking and the balance sheet. We can no longer be the ones who have no business discussing the religious actions within our Church. We can no longer be the ones who take care of the finances and forget about the faith. If we do not see it, we will not have it. (OR If we do not see it, we maybe the problem!)

The point that I hope I have made in this presentation, as fearful as it may be, is that Christianity is not changing-it has already transformed and is different than ever before, because we are in a transformed shrinking world that is different than ever before. Remember the awesome and incredible paradigm shift that occurred two-thousand years ago, when the imaginations of the followers of Jesus

were brought the light to see the One, True God of old even more clearly and lovingly than they had ever known through the prophets of old? The prophets of old prepared the people for the decisive activity of God; but it was this Jesus who transformed the minds of the Israelites with a vast array of new insights, new visions-a new imagination of compassion, love and overwhelming passionate sensitivity for the poor. **If we do not see it, we are all on the verge of trouble!**

Faith and Finance. It is most certainly complicated. You are called to be leaders-no, prophets-in our Church at this time in our shrinking world. Prophecy is not only the gift of the ordained or consecrated. We can no longer be content with staying in our office with our calculators and computer worrying about paying the bills and investing the endowments. We must do what will be out-of-the-ordinary and expected purview of our jobs and be concerned with and a voice for how we are church and institutional church in our new shrinking world. It is we, who have perspectives that must be heard and considered in the deliberations and actions of our church. If we do not see it, are we con peccati?

Of course many of us are not theologians. But, have you not heard it said, "Theologians study theology because they want to avoid hell. Holy people study theology because they have been there." And, believe me, anyone who has been in church finances recently has been there! Ladies and gentlemen, it is not business as usual for our shrinking world or for our church. I believe you are called to be prophetic partners as never before envisioned in our church. If we do not see it, we will not have it.

Is what I am saying outrageous and never before understood? Well, I call your attention to a passage from the Book of the Prophet Amos (7:12-15).

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos, "Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn your bread by prophesying, but never again prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple." Amos answered Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The Lord took me from following the flock, and said to me, `Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"

If we translate this to today's world and remove the "poetic mist," the passage would read something like this: (Shall we call the following the version from Louie's "Book of Faith and Finance"?)

"Hey Amaziah, I know that I'm rocking the boat by speaking up in the religious arena, but hold on a moment," exclaimed Amos. "Listen, Amaziah," continued Amos, "don't think for one moment you can separate me as a businessman from my faith." Then Amos impatiently and forcefully said to Amaziah, "Don't you dare paint me into a corner and tell me to shut up about my faith. After all, I have a darn good business running my accounting firm, and my side-line business of strategic planning. I didn't want to get involved with all this God business, but the Lord came into my heart and spoke to me. The Lord told me not only should I be a good businessman, but now I better start speaking up about faith and finance. "

And just how do I do that? Tell the boss “Don’t spend money on that! Don’t invest in that? Give it to the poor!?” Is it sinful if I don’t? It can certainly make life complicated if I do!

Perhaps some exegetes or hermeneutical experts would have some questions about my interpretation of the prophet Amos, but I believe you get the point just the same.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we need you to have and use a prophetic imagination in this new emerging shrinking world that will lead us to new ways to overcome the many cultural, economic and religious differences on our globe, in order for our church to be able to bring Jesus' Good News to the new emerging shrinking world.

If we do not see it, we will not have it.

During this transformation in our faith and in our finances, it is essential that you help us overcome the horrible and devastating division and fragmentation that is growing in our institutional church and Christianity as a whole. Do not permit our church to become the battlefield for the ideologues for conservatism or liberalism or radicalism or fundamentalism or any other "ism" out there. Remember well that our Christian hope is that we may all be one-not necessarily the same. And, armed with such a new imagination-instead of bombs and missiles-we will bring to our shrinking world unique and innovative solutions to world poverty.

It was the likes of William Makepiece Thackeray, not some great religious figure, who said: “It's not dying for faith that's so hard, it's living up to it.”

It isn’t necessarily con pecati, but it can be very complicati!

And just this past summer we were provided with some insights into the very conscience and soul of Mother Teresa, of whom we had certainly thought, “How lucky she is to have her profound faith so completely imbedded, to be a walking saint, meekly and, oh, so humbly self-assured in the profound love of God.” And now we know that she struggled, just as we all do in a world that is complicated, and with us in it, con peccati! But in spite of daily, perhaps moment-by-moment struggles with faith, we can all do better with our lives for the world. Let us, bring Faith and Finance together. After all, in this new, ever-shrinking world, religion is not very far removed from business. Holiness is Us doing right in a shrinking world. God bless you all!