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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

RONALD G. ROBERSON, C.S.P.*

As one of his Paulist confreres, it is truly a pleasure to introduce this issue of *The Jurist*, dedicated by the editors to John E. Lynch, CSP, administrator, teacher, scholar, and priest.

Born in New York City in 1924, John Edward Lynch moved with his family ten years later to Washington, DC, where he would spend most of the rest of his life. He entered the Paulist novitiate in Oak Ridge, New Jersey, on July 1, 1944 and, after completing his studies at St. Paul's College in Washington, was ordained a priest on May 1, 1951. After four years at the Paulist parish in Los Angeles, Fr Lynch moved to Toronto in 1955 for advanced studies at the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies. He would defend his dissertation, a study of the theory of knowledge of Vital du Four (c. 1260-1327), in 1965. In the meantime, he returned to Washington in 1959 and took up a position at Saint Paul's College where he taught until it was closed as an academic institution in 1972.

In 1967 Fr Lynch began his long association with The Catholic University of America, which provided him with the environment in which his many academic achievements would unfold. Granted tenure in 1971, Fr Lynch was named a full professor of the History of Canon Law and Medieval History in 1974, served as the Chair of the Department of Canon Law from 1974 until 1983, and as Chair of the Department of History from 1983 until 1986. In addition, he was Academic Vice President and Vice Provost for Graduate Studies from 1991 until 1998. To this day he continues to serve on the editorial board of *The Jurist*, and for many years he was active as its book review editor.

He has been significantly involved in various academic and professional associations in history and in canon law. Among them one might note the American Catholic Historical Association, the American Society of Church History, and the Medieval Academy of America.

For many years, Fr Lynch has been a member of the Canon Law Society of America. In 1972 he served as a member of the Board of Governors and in 1974-1975 he functioned as its vice-president. The esteem in

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which he is held by his colleagues in canon law was evident in his selection in 1984 to receive the Society's prestigious Role of Law Award.

As a perusal of the long list of his publications and the courses he taught will reveal, Fr Lynch's academic interests extend well beyond his original focus in canon law and medieval history. Indeed, he has addressed some of the major issues facing the Church today: clerical celibacy, diocesan and parish structures, the role of the bishop, communications in the Church, the exercise of power, divorce and remarriage, and the ordination of women are all included in his studies. In these matters Fr Lynch does not propose a return to some fanciful golden age of the past, but provides a sound historical and theological foundation to enable the Church to adjust to new situations, to the diverse social and cultural contexts in which the Church finds itself as it becomes a world-wide communion.

This vision of the Church has also led Fr Lynch to address the major ecumenical questions of our times. He has examined interchurch marriages, ecumenical guidelines, Protestant understandings of the office of bishop and church governance, and the Eastern Churches. When he received the Canon Law Society of America's Role of Law Award, Fr Lynch remarked that ecumenism is important because the "magnificent vision held out to us by the Second Vatican Council" is "a World Church in which all peoples feel at home and a Church which embraces all believers in Christ."

Fr Lynch has also offered his many gifts in service of the Paulist Fathers, the religious community to which he has belonged since 1945. He has served frequently as a delegate to Paulist General Assemblies, played a major role in the revision of the community's constitution after the Vatican II reforms, and has been consulted on innumerable canonical questions. After his retirement from Catholic University in December 1999, Fr Lynch graciously agreed to serve the community as Paulist Archivist, a position that has kept him very active. During his many years at St. Paul's College—where he has been in residence since 1959—"Father Jack" has been a steady presence as a brother Paulist to the rest of the community, and has increasingly served as a wisdom figure for the many seminarians who have passed through the formation process there. I know I speak on behalf of the entire Paulist community when I say that we have been richly rewarded by his presence among us, and that we warmly recognize what a gift he has been to the Church in our land and beyond.