

# IMPROVING THE LAW SCHOOL CLASSROOM AND EXPERIENCE THROUGH PRAYER: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.” There are approximately fifty religiously affiliated law schools in the United States. As faith-based communities, these law schools can integrate their faiths into the education they provide by, among other things, incorporating in the classroom a central characteristic of most religions—prayer.*

*This article includes anonymous survey responses from students at four different Catholic law schools across the nation concerning whether the students liked the fact that their professors prayed at the beginning of class. The article, based on those responses, discusses the advantages of a professor praying in the classroom, including the following: (1) prayer creates a reverent, focused, and unified classroom environment; (2) prayer*

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*gives the students a chance to enjoy a few moments of peace, gain their composure, and prepare for class; (3) prayer creates community; (4) professors model positive behavior for the students by showing that one may stay true to one's religion while still being a lawyer; (5) prayer reminds law students and professors of the world outside the law school, particularly when praying for others; (6) the power of prayer can result in positive results; (7) prayer fosters the faith-based communities that law schools promote as a plus to their students and recruits; and (8) professors can help mold law students to become better attorneys and better people. This article also discusses and responds to the real and perceived disadvantages of prayer in the classroom. Finally, the article includes recommendations for a professor who wants to incorporate prayer into the classroom.*

*This article concludes that the advantages of professors praying in the classroom can have profound effects on the classroom environment and the law students themselves. Any real or perceived disadvantages of praying by law professors in religiously affiliated law schools are heavily outweighed by the advantages.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”<sup>1</sup> Prayer remains a central feature of not just Christianity, but of most religions.<sup>2</sup>

There are approximately fifty religiously affiliated law schools in the United States.<sup>3</sup> As faith-based communities, these law schools can integrate their faiths into the education they provide by, among other things, incorporating prayer in the classroom.<sup>4</sup>

This article includes anonymous survey responses from students at four different Catholic law schools across the nation concerning whether the students liked the fact that their professors prayed at the beginning of class.<sup>5</sup> Of the survey respondents, 78% of the law students stated that they liked the fact that their professors prayed at the beginning of class, while only 7% disliked it, and 15% were indifferent.

These results demonstrate that an overwhelming majority of students at these religiously affiliated law schools liked the fact that their professors prayed at the beginning of class, a small percentage were indifferent, and an even smaller percentage did not like the fact that the professors prayed. These results confirm that many law students chose to attend a religious law school because of the integration of faith and legal education at these schools. Also, some law students that attend religious law schools may not be religious at all, but they expect some religious displays during their time at such law schools; thus, they remain indifferent to prayer in class. Finally, there are always some law students who will not be in favor of some approach taken by a professor, even if that act is praying in a religious law school.

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1. Zoe Mintz, *Martin Luther King Jr. Quotes: 25 Inspirational Sayings to Share on MLK Day 2014*, INT’L BUS. TIMES, (Jan. 20, 2014, 10:31 AM), <http://www.ibtimes.com/martin-luther-king-jr-quotes-25-inspirational-sayings-share-mlk-day-2014-1544210>.

2. See Nissan Mindel, *The Meaning of Prayer*, CHABAD, [http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/682090/jewish/The-Meaning-of-Prayer.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/682090/jewish/The-Meaning-of-Prayer.htm) (last visited Mar. 3, 2014) (explaining the importance of prayer in Judaism); *Prayer, Five Pillars of Islam*, WHY ISLAM, <http://www.whyyislam.org/submission/five-pillars-of-islam-2/prayer/> (last visited Mar. 3, 2014) (including prayer as one of the five pillars of Islam).

3. See Bradley J.B. Toben, *The Added Value and Prerogatives of Law Schools with a Faith Mission*, 59 J. LEGAL EDUC. 158 (2009).

4. Phyllis L. Crocker, *The Paradox of Being an Interim Dean: The Permanent Nature of a Transitory Position*, 44 U. TOL. L. REV. 319, 325 (2013) (“Liberty University is a consciously Christian school [and] prayer at the beginning of each class [is] a way of demonstrating the centrality of that belief”) (Alteration in original).

5. See *infra* Appendix A.

The portions of the survey that stand out are the insightful and candid comments provided by the law students. These students from law schools across the country discussed a variety of the positive aspects of professors praying at the beginning of class, as well as a few negative aspects, and the students consistently mentioned similar advantages to praying.

Part I of the article provides a description of the study. Details include methodology, research participation, data collection, and data interpretation. This section also includes a brief narrative regarding the reliability of the results.

Part II of the article discusses the findings in terms of the advantages of a professor praying at the beginning of class, which include the following: (1) prayer creates a reverent, focused and unified classroom environment; (2) prayer gives the students a chance to enjoy a few moments of peace, gain their composure, and prepare for class; (3) prayer creates community and helps to unite the law students; (4) professors model positive behavior for the students by showing that one may stay true to one's religion while still being a lawyer; (5) prayer reminds law students and professors of the world outside the law school, particularly when praying for others; (6) the power of prayer can result in positive results; (7) prayer fosters the faith-based communities that law schools promote as a plus to their students and recruits; and (8) professors can help mold law students to become better attorneys and better people. Part III of this article discusses and responds to the findings of real and perceived disadvantages of prayer in the classroom, and Part IV includes recommendations for a professor who wants to incorporate prayer into the classroom.

Religiously affiliated law schools must not only educate law students about the substantive aspects of the law, but they must also encourage their law students to integrate their faith into their professional lives. Prayer by professors in law school reminds law students that their faith must be an integral part of their approach to their careers, and it demonstrates to law students that religion and law may coexist.

Despite the numerous and various positive aspects of professors praying in class, several arguments against prayer remain. For example, some surveyed students explained that prayer by a professor in the classroom might make some students uncomfortable if those students are not religious or they are not accustomed to praying in public. In response to that argument, individuals who willingly choose to attend a religiously affiliated law school should not be surprised when there are public acts of religion, such as prayer, at the law school. Several surveyed students who identified themselves as atheists or non-religious mentioned that they had expected some type of religious practice at their Catholic law schools.

Religiously affiliated law schools should be less concerned with trying not to offend their professors and law students who are not of their religion with public religious displays, such as prayer. Instead, these law schools should be more concerned with creating an educational environment that adheres to and embraces the mission of the religiously affiliated school. Prayer, a central component of many religions, helps a religiously affiliated law school accomplish that mission.

This article concludes that the advantages of a professor praying in class can have profound effects on the classroom environment and the law students themselves. Any real or perceived disadvantages of praying by law professors in religiously affiliated law schools are heavily outweighed by the advantages. Before discussing those findings concerning the advantages and disadvantages of professors praying in the law school classroom, the following section provides a description of the study.

## I. DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

### A. *Research Methods*

This study explored if prayer by professors improves the classroom and law school experience. Through empirical research, this study investigated the advantages and disadvantages of prayer in private, religiously affiliated law school classrooms. Through the collection and analysis of anonymous survey results from law school students from four Catholic institutions across the nation, this study documents the profound results of the multiple advantages and scarce disadvantages of the power of prayer in a law school classroom.

### B. *Participants*

I initially sent out a request to twenty-five religiously affiliated law schools—twenty-two of which are Catholic and the other three are non-Catholic Christian—to participate in the survey. A number of schools responded that they did not have any professors that prayed. One school stated that it had a professor that prayed but not at the beginning of class. Other schools did not respond at all, several declined to participate, and ultimately several stated that they would participate. Four Catholic law schools participated in the survey.

### C. *Methods of Data Collection*

Each of the four Catholic law schools distributed an anonymous prayer survey to classes in which a professor at the law school prayed at the beginning of class.<sup>6</sup> Professors distributed the survey at the participating schools via a link to the online survey. One hundred and seventy-five law students from those four participating law schools responded to the one-question survey: “Did you like the fact that your professor prayed at the beginning of class?” The responses included “Yes, No, Indifferent.” Students also could explain their answers if they wanted, and many students provided explanations. The survey question, statistics regarding the responses, and all of the comments are included in Appendix A of this article.

Prior to distributing the survey, I informed the law schools that participation in the survey would be anonymous for each student and each law school. As a result, the responses contained in the appendix of this article omit any reference to a certain school or professor, as well as any information that could easily lead to the identification of any of the participating schools.

### D. *Data Interpretation: Inductive Analysis*

Survey results provided significant findings through inductive analysis.<sup>7</sup> Based on the inductive analysis method, the data led to themes expressing significant relationships in regards to how prayer is viewed in the classroom. The results proved to be consistent from respondents across four different law schools.

### E. *Reliability of the Study*

There are potential biases that are implicit in this study. For example, the way a student perceives prayer in class may be based on their attitude toward and perception of the particular professor that is praying. For instance, if a student dislikes a professor for reasons other than the fact that the professor prayed, then the student may view prayer by that professor as unpleasant as well. The same could be said of the converse, i.e., that the student likes prayer based in part on the student’s approval of the professor.

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6. See *infra* Appendix A (section containing Prayer Survey Question 1).

7. See generally J. AMOS HATCH, *DOING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN EDUCATION SETTINGS* (2002) (discussing the process of inductive analysis that includes the researcher looking for patterns and finding connections through specific elements using a systematic approach).

The consistent results from the four different law schools do not indicate, however, that this bias substantially affected the study.

Students selected to participate in the survey chose to attend religiously affiliated law schools, suggesting that they may have a previously-existing affinity toward the religious aspects of the institution they chose, such as praying in the classroom. This potential bias is alleviated because many students choose a law school based on factors other than religion, including but not limited to the prestige of the law school, which law schools accepted them, location, and cost of tuition.

Many law students who attend religiously affiliated law schools are not religious themselves or do not affiliate themselves with any religion. Even if some of the students chose to come to a religiously affiliated law school because they wanted demonstrative signs of their faith in the classroom, then acknowledgement by some of those students that one of the benefits of prayer in the classroom is to provide those students with a visual display of their religion is a positive and desired response. In any event, it does not appear that this potential bias substantially affected the study.

Moreover, one may argue that students typically want to please their professors, which could potentially result in students answering in the affirmative on this survey simply to please their professors. However, the survey was anonymous to protect the identity of the respondents and allow for candid and honest responses. Law students typically have no issue with providing honest, candid evaluations of professors, which is due in part to the fact that professor evaluations are also anonymous. Based on the negative responses and comments obtained in this survey, it is clear that students could and did provide responses that answered the question in the negative. Finally, using an anonymous survey format would likely alleviate the concern by students who might be worried about negative repercussions if they answered the survey in the negative.

The findings of the study show the numerous advantages of a professor praying in the law school classroom. The findings also demonstrate that any disadvantages of professors praying in a law school classroom are vastly outweighed by the advantages. The following sections discuss these findings.

## I. THE ADVANTAGES OF PRAYER IN THE CLASSROOM

### A. *Prayer Creates an Atmosphere of Reverence, Focus, and Unity*

In *Teaching Law By Design*, the authors emphasize that a key to excellent teaching is creating a “positive and welcoming environment.”<sup>8</sup> Prayer at the beginning of class creates a reverent, focused, and unified atmosphere. As an initial matter, prayer evokes a reverent response from others as most people recognize prayer as a solemn and holy act.<sup>9</sup> A number of surveyed students described professors praying at the beginning of class as “spiritual.”<sup>10</sup>

Along those same lines, several surveyed students said that prayer set the “tone” for class.<sup>11</sup> One student described that tone with regard to faith, “[Prayer] sets a tone, not simply for the class period, but for the school in general. When I’m in the building, I know that I am surrounded by people who, like myself [sic], know that faith comes before study, and that makes law school a little less stressful.”<sup>12</sup> Thus, prayer creates a reverent atmosphere in class.

Prayer also creates a focused environment. Numerous surveyed students stated that prayer “focused” or “refocused” them on class.<sup>13</sup> For example, one student explained, “Prayer is a great way to bring focus and prospective [sic] to your mind before you start class. Prayer helps me to clear my mind about whatever I was thinking about before class starts and to focus on the task at hand.”<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, another student said of prayer and focus, “My professor’s prayer helps to prepare me spiritually and mentally to focus on the content and purpose of the class.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, prayer also creates a more focused classroom environment.

In addition, prayer creates a unifying atmosphere in class. A number of surveyed students mentioned how prayer in class unites the class and makes

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8. MICHAEL HUNTER SCHWARTZ, SOPHIE M. SPARROW & GERALD F. HESS, *TEACHING LAW BY DESIGN: ENGAGING STUDENTS FROM THE SYLLABUS TO THE FINAL EXAM 25* (2009) [hereinafter SCHWARTZ ET AL., *TEACHING LAW*].

9. *See Stein v. Plainwell Cmty. Sch.*, 822 F.2d 1406, 1409–10 (6th Cir. 1987) (recognizing that prayer, even in the public sector, solemnizes an occasion).

10. *See infra* Appendix A.

11. *See infra* Appendix A.

12. *See infra* Appendix A, para.16 (alteration in original).

13. *See infra* Appendix A.

14. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 89.

15. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 75.

it more cohesive.<sup>16</sup> For example, one student commented, “There seems to be more cohesion in class. Regardless of what religion you are from, prayer in class renders a more intimate atmosphere that everyone in class can relate to and you will never forget.”<sup>17</sup> Similarly, one student stated that “[p]rayer . . . unites us all.”<sup>18</sup> And another student mentioned how prayer brings the class together, “Also, our class prayer brings a sense of unity to our section.”<sup>19</sup>

A unified, cohesive classroom results in a positive and safe learning environment. One surveyed student explained that “[prayer] adds a sense of comfort and informality to the classroom.”<sup>20</sup> When students feel safer, then they are able to perform better. Answering questions in front of seventy or eighty of one’s peers is nerve-wracking enough in the first semester of law school. Prayer can help create an environment where students feel connected to each other and more comfortable, which can help ease the tension knowing that mistakes will not lead to merciless ridicule. At the least, students are a little less self-conscious than they would normally be, which is a positive class objective.

Thus, prayer by professors at the beginning of class makes the classroom more reverent, cohesive, and comfortable for law students. Prayer also fosters a more respectful environment, particularly if the professors pray for respect.

The “most important characteristic of effective law teachers” is respect, namely where professors treat their students with respect.<sup>21</sup> *What the Best Law Teachers Do* also emphasizes the importance of mutual respect between professor and students, which helps create an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.<sup>22</sup>

A professor praying at the beginning of class, particularly if the professor prays for respect and trust amongst the students in the class, creates a positive and welcoming environment. One surveyed student wrote of prayer’s effect on the classroom environment, “Prayer before class made the classroom environment feel more collaborative[,] which is a nice change of pace considering we are all in constant competition with one another.”<sup>23</sup>

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16. See *infra* Appendix A.

17. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 54.

18. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 58 (alteration in original).

19. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 107.

20. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 169 (alteration in original).

21. SCHWARTZ ET AL., TEACHING LAW, *supra* note 8, at 24.

22. MICHAEL HUNTER SCHWARTZ, GERALD F. HESS & SOPHIE M. SPARROW, WHAT THE BEST LAW TEACHERS DO 81–82 (2013) [hereinafter SCHWARTZ ET AL., WHAT THE BEST LAW TEACHERS DO].

23. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 128 (alteration in original).

Praying for mutual respect in class also makes the professor's expectations clear, which assists in setting the standards of behavior for the students. One surveyed student said of prayer in class, "I think it also set an expectations [sic] of what the professor expected for class—an attitude of dignity and respect."<sup>24</sup> Similarly, another student stated, "[Praying] created a safe class environment that made us all aware of each other and really made each of us respect the other and their comments or opinions."<sup>25</sup>

Prayer certainly has a positive effect on the classroom in fostering a respectful and welcoming environment.<sup>26</sup> In addition, emphasizing that the professor and students are expected to treat each other with dignity and respect addresses the basic need that individuals have to be treated with respect, which in turn helps to create a safe and positive learning environment.

Prayer not only creates an atmosphere in the classroom that is reverent, positive, and cohesive, but it also provides students with some time to reflect and prepare for class itself.

#### B. *Prayer Gives the Students a Few Moments to Pause, Reflect, and Prepare for Class*

An overwhelming number of students discussed how prayer at the beginning of each class allowed them an opportunity to gather their thoughts, pause for a few moments, and prepare for class.<sup>27</sup> For example, one student stated, "The prayer before class helps calm the nerves and anxiety of public speaking as well as just changes the overall energy in the room. I would encourage the continuation of prayer before class."<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, one student discussed the value of praying at the beginning of class for students with different beliefs by stating, "For those who do not believe in prayer or have different beliefs . . . taking a minute or two before class to be still and quiet can either give those people time to pray . . . or to simply reflect, meditate, and gather their thoughts before diving into the law."<sup>29</sup> The student continued, "In our class, I noticed that everyone in the room was respectful and quiet during the prayer."<sup>30</sup>

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24. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 127.

25. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 119 (alteration in original).

26. *See infra* Appendix A.

27. *See infra* Appendix A.

28. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 123.

29. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 116 (alteration in original).

30. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 116.

Moreover, another student discussed how prayer helped to relax the student and keep things in perspective: “Praying before class definitely helped me to relax my mind and remind me as well that there was a bigger picture in the world and to put my situation into a frame of reference.”<sup>31</sup>

Law students also appreciate prayer at the beginning of class because it gives them a chance to enjoy a few moments of peace. Indeed, law students used the following words to describe the effect of prayer on them: soothes; calms; refreshes; serenity; tranquility; peace.<sup>32</sup>

Prayer also allows students to prepare mentally to begin class. As one student stated frankly:

I am not a religious person by any means (I’m an atheist), but I appreciated the way a prayer at the beginning of class ended all conversations and focused the students on the subject at hand. I equate it to turning down the house-lights at a concert hall to make the audience shut up and listen.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, all students can benefit from those few moments of prayer at the beginning of class. Prayer also benefits the students by bringing the class together as a community.

### C. *Prayer Creates Community*

Individuals often employ prayer when they are facing a major challenge or catastrophe. Law students face significant obstacles when they attend law school, particularly these days. Law students, as they always have, must meet the incredibly rigorous educational demands of law school, which typically include one’s entire grade for a class determined by one examination in a class, and the perpetual stress of performing in law school. Law school now also involves facing a daunting, competitive job market that exacerbates the pressure of doing well in school. One student said that “prayer at the beginning of class was always a nice reminder that no matter how hard the material became I would still be able to get through it.”<sup>34</sup>

Prayer not only helps individuals, but it also tends to unite people because it sometimes involves a number of different people asking God for the same thing. For example, prayer at church unites the congregation as they pray for the community, the parishioners, and those in need.

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31. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 121.

32. *See infra* Appendix A.

33. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 132.

34. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 138.

Similar to prayer in church by a congregation, prayer in law school helps bring the professors and students together, creating a community and fostering an atmosphere where students feel they are not alone in the struggle of law school, which can allow them to persevere and succeed. A number of students commented on how prayer brings the class together. For example, one surveyed student said, “I come from a religious background and believe that prayer is a great way to create a sense of unity among the group.”<sup>35</sup> Another student commented, “I think that [prayer] provides another opportunity for our class to become more of a community.”<sup>36</sup> The student explained that “[A]lthough[] we all have different beliefs, we do attend a Catholic law school, and studying here one should recognize that . . . [w]e are becoming lawyers with a unique perspective that embodies the characteristics of exceptional moral and ethical standards, and compassion for others.”<sup>37</sup> Still another surveyed law student said the following of prayer and community: “I think praying before class is calming and it brings us together as a class.”<sup>38</sup>

Prayer brings people together, including law school classmates and their professors.<sup>39</sup> Prayer also allows professors to model to students how to incorporate their faith into the practice of law.

#### D. Professors Model Positive Behavior for the Students

Law students view their “teachers as role models.”<sup>40</sup> Law professors “represent the profession to [their] students (especially for first-year students).”<sup>41</sup> Law students look to their professors to model how they should conduct themselves, which includes how to act professionally, how to dress, and how to communicate effectively.<sup>42</sup>

Law students also look to their professors to see if, and how, law professors can stay true to their religion while still being lawyers. When

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35. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 148.

36. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 139 (alteration in original).

37. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 139 (alteration in original).

38. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 42.

39. Prayer by professors also shows that the professors care about their students. In *What the Best Law Teachers Do*, the authors argue that “law teachers’ attitudes and relational behaviors are even more critical to the learning process” than technique, and, therefore, law professors should show that they care about their law students. SCHWARTZ ET AL., *WHAT THE BEST LAW TEACHERS DO*, *supra* note 22, at 187. Several surveyed students mentioned either how they appreciated the “spiritual support” from their professors through prayer or how prayer helped demonstrate that the professors cared for their students. See *infra* Appendix A.

40. SCHWARTZ ET AL., *WHAT THE BEST LAW TEACHERS DO*, *supra* note 22, at 140.

41. SCHWARTZ ET AL., *TEACHING LAW*, *supra* note 8 at 97 (alteration in original).

42. See *id.*

students witness their law professor praying, they understand that they need not abandon their religion, values, or morals when they become lawyers.<sup>43</sup> In fact, law professors praying with their students reinforces the notion that law and religion may be practiced simultaneously.<sup>44</sup>

Surveyed law students indicated that prayer by professors showed them that the practice of religion and the practice of law can coexist. For example, one student explained, “[B]eing able to pray before class and combine the law school side of my life with the spiritual part of my life has helped me realize that those things can co-exist quite harmoniously.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly, another student stated, “Praying before class . . . [h]elped me learn how to entwine my faith with being a future attorney.”<sup>46</sup> In addition, another student observed, “Being in class and hearing that one does not have to put faith on the back burner to be a lawyer is comforting, as too often [one] hear[s] bad connotations associated with the profession. I thoroughly enjoyed the prayer and wish more professors would do the same.”<sup>47</sup>

Professor Randy Lee contends that religious law schools should “conduct themselves in a way that expresses their religious faith” and that a person’s beliefs should be reflected in that person’s actions.<sup>48</sup> The same could be said of professors at religiously affiliated law schools—professors must conduct themselves in a way that expresses their religious faith, which

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43. A.J. Buckingham, *Jesus in the Courtroom: The Christian Legal Society: Lawyers Using the Bible to Do the Law’s Work*, 11 STUDENT LAWYER 8, 10–11 (1982).

People come to law school with a vibrant faith that’s significant to them, that has been important and manifested in their actions. When they come to law school, they’re faced with the myth that the law is a jealous mistress. The implication is that they have to sacrifice everything for law school, so people put their faith on the shelves for three years. When they get out of law school, they find they’ve lost the love of the Lord. . . . These Christian lawyers may try to integrate their faith into their practice, but they can’t do it because they didn’t do it in law school.

*Id.*

44. John M. Breen, *Justice and Jesuit Legal Education: A Critique*, 36 LOY. U. CHI. L.J. 383, 386 (2005) (“Although most lawyers do not completely abandon their most basic understandings of right and wrong, they separate these ‘private’ beliefs from their ‘professional’ activities, or they confine them to the narrow aspects of their work such as the *pro bono* matters they choose to take on.”).

45. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 116.

46. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 122 (alteration in original).

47. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 123 (alteration in original).

48. Randy Lee, *Are Religiously Affiliated Law Schools Obsolete in America? The View of an Outsider Looking in*, 74 ST. JOHN’S L. REV. 655, 661 (2000) [hereinafter Lee, *Religiously Affiliated Law Schools Obsolete*].

is possible through, among other means, the exercise of prayer at the beginning of class.<sup>49</sup>

Prayer by professors also helps to dispel the notion that intellectual ability and religious conviction are mutually exclusive. Professor James D. Gordon III discusses the importance of professors demonstrating their religious beliefs: “[T]o the extent that the professors are known to be persons of religious conviction, they provide examples to the students of the proposition that intellectual achievement and rigorous analysis are not incompatible with religious faith, and that they can even complement one another.”<sup>50</sup>

A surveyed student echoed Professor Gordon’s argument and recognized that prayer by professors helps to demonstrate the compatibility of intellectual achievement and religious conviction. The student commented, “I believe that people often associate religious beliefs with lower intelligence, and so when there is an opportunity to show that someone with advanced education has religious beliefs, it causes skeptics to rethink their opinions.”<sup>51</sup>

Law professors model positive behavior for their students when they pray, and they also break down stereotypes concerning religious conviction and intellectual ability. Professors also keep their students aware of the world outside the law school through prayer.

#### E. *Prayer Reminds Professors and Students of the Outside World*

Students and professors often feel encapsulated in the bubble (or cage) of law school. By praying, professors and students are reminded of others, including the less fortunate or those who are suffering.

Prayer also allows professors to help remind students of the outside world in general, and students appreciate those prayers. For example, one surveyed student commented on how the student preferred when professors prayed about what was “going on in the outside world.”<sup>52</sup>

Another surveyed student reflected on prayer and the outside world: “We also prayed for others based on current events and it reminded me that there is a whole world outside of law school and not to lose sight of the need

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49. Patrick J. Schiltz, *Understanding the Intersection of Business and Legal Ethics*, 1 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 1041, 1044 (2004) (arguing that law professors “must strive to teach students not merely through their words, but through their example”).

50. James D. Gordon, *The Importance of Religiously Affiliated Law Schools*, 37 CATH. LAW. 183, 186 (1997).

51. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 134.

52. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 24.

to help others.”<sup>53</sup> Similarly, one student stated that prayer helped to “put things in perspective and realize that although [sic] law school provides difficult challenges, there are others who are facing harsher more challenging moments in their lives.”<sup>54</sup>

Praying for and thinking of others outside of the law school community implores students to adopt a broader perspective on life. Prayer, in general, also has the power to help people heal, hope, and believe.

#### F. *The Power of Prayer*

Mahatma Gandhi once proclaimed, “Prayer is not an old woman’s idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action.”<sup>55</sup> Numerous studies exist that demonstrate how prayer can positively affect an outcome or change things in the world.<sup>56</sup>

Prayer at the beginning of class can result in tangible changes in the world or oneself. Prayer not only changes the atmosphere of the class, making it a more reverent and holy place, but it can also help heal a broken person or situation. Professor Lee asserts that Catholic law students “must embrace the tools of prayer and Spirit that served Saint Francis so well. This is so because prayer is ‘the most powerful tool we Christians have’. . . . and there are just some problems in the world that ‘can only come out through prayer.’”<sup>57</sup> A surveyed student acknowledged the power of prayer, “Prayer is hope and strength. Prayer is an anchor.”<sup>58</sup>

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53. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 127.

54. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 139.

55. Mahatma Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi > Quotes > Quotable Quote, GOODREADS, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/153506-prayer-is-not-an-old-woman-s-idle-amusement-properly-understood>.

56. See, e.g., Duke News and Communications, *Prayer, Noetic Studies Feasible; Results Indicate Benefit*, DUKEHEALTH.ORG, [http://www.dukehealth.org/health\\_library/news/5056](http://www.dukehealth.org/health_library/news/5056) (last visited Mar. 3, 2014) (Medical study done by Duke University Medical Center researchers) (“Cardiac patients who received intercessory prayer in addition to coronary stenting appeared to have better clinical outcomes than those treated with standard stenting therapy alone.”); Rob Stein, *Researchers Look at Prayer and Healing*, WASH. POST (Mar. 24, 2006), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/23/AR2006032302177.html> (“The quiet meditation and incantations of praying, or the comfort of being prayed for, appears to lower blood pressure, reduce stress hormones, slow the heart rate and have other potentially beneficial effects.”); Catherine Rauch, *Probing the Power of Prayer*, CNN (Jan. 18, 2000, 11:48 AM), <http://edition.cnn.com/2000/HEALTH/alternative/01/18/prayer.power.wmd/> (“A recent, controversial study of cardiac patients conducted at St. Luke’s Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, concludes that this type of prayer—known as intercessory prayer—may indeed make a difference.”).

57. Randy Lee, *Catholic Legal Education at the Edge of a New Millennium: Do We Still Have the Spirit to Send Forth Saints?*, 31 GONZ. L. REV. 565, 587 (1996) [hereinafter Lee, *Catholic Legal Education*] (alteration in original).

58. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 14.

Another powerful purpose of prayer is to thank God. The Book of Psalms says, “Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”<sup>59</sup> One surveyed student agreed, “[Prayer] gives you a chance to stop and be thankful.”<sup>60</sup>

Thus, prayer is a tool of the faithful that can result in tangible results, and it also allows professors and law students to give thanks for everything they have been given. Praying in the classroom also fulfills the mission of religiously affiliated schools that seek to integrate faith into legal education.

#### G. *Prayer Fosters the Faith-Based Community of Religiously Affiliated Law Schools*

Religiously affiliated law schools use their roots and tradition in religion to attract recruits.<sup>61</sup> “In some ways, religiously based higher education is itself a market niche. We are directing our programs and institutions to those prospective students who, because of religious affinity or a desire to reinforce fundamental values, seek a religiously based institution.”<sup>62</sup>

Prayer, a central component of many religions, embodies the faith-based communities that law schools promote as a plus to their students and recruits.<sup>63</sup> Thus, religiously affiliated law schools can display their religious identity to law students by encouraging the act of and highlighting professors praying in class with law students.<sup>64</sup>

One surveyed student asserted the importance of a professor praying at the beginning of class and the choice to attend a religiously affiliated law school. The student said:

I chose to apply at [name of law school omitted] specifically because they are Catholic. Having chosen a Catholic university, I was pleased to find our class started with a prayer. The other classes while very informative and

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59. *Psalm* 107:1 (Revised Standard, Catholic Edition).

60. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 78 (alteration in original).

61. See Howard B. Eisenberg, *Mission, Marketing, and Academic Freedom in Today's Religiously Affiliated Law Schools: An Essay*, 11 REGENT U. L. REV. 1, 6 (1999).

62. *Id.*

63. See Jeffrey A. Brauch, *Faith-Based Law Schools and an Apprenticeship in Professional Identity*, 42 U. TOL. L. REV. 593, 598–99 (2011) (stating that not only do faith-based law schools attempt to attract students with their roots, but they also have a unique opportunity “to explore issues of professional identity with students and to train them in professionalism” because they can “explore issues of character, morality, and purpose . . . in a . . . deep and meaningful way”).

64. See Marie A. Failing, *Pilgrimage or Exodus?: Responding to Faculty Faith Diversity at Religiously Affiliated Law Schools*, 81 U. DET. MERCY L. REV. 719, 720–21 (2004); John T. Noonan, Jr., *A Catholic Law School*, 67 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 1037, 1045 (1992) (stating that, among other things, the practice of public prayer helps to maintain a Catholic character in a law school).

educational, could have taken place at any secular law school. . . . Catholics are synonymous with education and it should be possible to have more prayer without sacrificing any of our educational goals.<sup>65</sup>

Prayer at the beginning of class represents a tangible expression of faith that allows students to feel that they truly are at a religiously affiliated law school. Rather than talking about how religious a law school is, professors can show their students through praying that faith is integrated into the law school.

One surveyed student discussed prayer and the integration of faith and law school: “I wanted to attend a school that visibly integrated faith into its teaching.”<sup>66</sup> The student went on to say that although people can find “healing and redemption” through prayer, this student prayed to remind himself that “there is a Good greater than [himself] and it is against that Good that [he] will ultimately be measured.”<sup>67</sup> He eloquently stated, “My greatest fear is not that I will fail as a lawyer but that through being a great lawyer I will fail as a man.”<sup>68</sup>

Professor David L. Gregory opines, “Catholic-affiliated law schools have an especially strong mandate to provide opportunities for prayer,” citing the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (meaning “Born from the Heart of the Church”), which is a document issued by the Vatican.<sup>69</sup> It states that “[a]s a natural expression of the Catholic identity of the University, the university community *should give a practical demonstration of its faith in its daily activity*, with important moments of reflection and of prayer.”<sup>70</sup>

Prayer in the classroom may not be common or even present in most religiously affiliated schools, but several schools do incorporate prayer in the classroom. In fact, several law schools known for prayer in the classroom ranked extremely high in a recent study regarding the best law schools for the devout.

PreLaw, a National Jurist publication (“PreLaw”), ranked the top law schools for devout Catholic, Christian, Mormon, Muslim, and Jewish students.<sup>71</sup> The top two ranked law schools for devout Catholics, Ave Maria School of Law and the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota, respectively,

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65. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 120.

66. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 14.

67. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 14 (alteration in original).

68. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 14.

69. David L. Gregory, *Where to Pray? A Survey Regarding Prayer Rooms in A.B.A. Accredited, Religiously Affiliated Law Schools*, 1993 BYU L. REV. 1287, 1307–08 n.84 (1993).

70. Pope John Paul II, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* [Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff] para. 39 (1990).

71. See Mike Stetz, *Best Law Schools for the Devout*, PRELAW, Winter 2014, at 28, 31.

are well-known for their professors praying in class.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, in making its finding that Ave Maria School of Law ranked number one for devout Catholics, PreLaw noted that “classes normally begin with prayers.”<sup>73</sup> Likewise, the founding Associate Dean of the University of St. Thomas School of Law, Patrick Schiltz, now a federal judge in Minneapolis, Minnesota, once said of St. Thomas: “Religion is woven into the fabric of St. Thomas. Many classes start with prayer or reflection, as do all faculty meetings and public events.”<sup>74</sup>

Additionally, two of the top three ranked law schools for devout Christians also maintain a reputation of professors praying at the beginning of class.<sup>75</sup> For example, Liberty University School of Law (ranked number one), as described by one observer, “is a consciously Christian school [and] prayer at the beginning of each class [is] a way of demonstrating the centrality of that belief.”<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Regent University Law School (ranked number three) adds ten minutes to every class for community prayer, teaching, and worship to affirm “the relationship between students’ professional training and Christian commitment.”<sup>77</sup>

Thus, a professor praying in class promotes the faith-based communities that religiously affiliated law schools seek. In addition, professors can use prayer to develop law students into the best attorneys and individuals they can be.

#### H. *Prayer Helps Mold Law Students into Better Attorneys and Better People*

Law professors possess the ability to mold students to become the best attorneys possible.<sup>78</sup> Law professors can also challenge and encourage their students to become better people. Professors can pray, for example, that everyone should treat each other with dignity and respect. Just as with any concept, whether it be that “consideration is something of value given in

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72. *See id.* at 30.

73. *Id.*

74. Schiltz, *supra* note 49, at 1051; *see also* Jennifer L. Wright, *Religious Law Schools and Democratic Society*, 57 HOW. L.J. 277, 312 (2013) (stating similarly that some St. Thomas law school classes begin with prayer).

75. *See* Stetz, *supra* note 71, at 31.

76. Crocker, *supra* note 4, at 325 (alteration in original) (concerning prayer at the law school); *see also* Stetz, *supra* note 71, at 31 (regarding the number one ranking).

77. *Spiritual Life: Class Devotions*, REGENT UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, [http://www.regent.edu/acad/schlaw/student\\_life/spiritual.cfm](http://www.regent.edu/acad/schlaw/student_life/spiritual.cfm) (last visited Mar. 3, 2014) (concerning prayer at the law school).

78. Schiltz, *supra* note 49, at 1044 (opining that faculty at a Catholic law school “must accept that their first responsibility . . . is teaching and mentoring—shaping their students into skilled and ethical lawyers who will further the ministry of the Church”).

exchange for a promise,” or “federal courts are courts of limited jurisdiction,” if a teacher drills a concept into the students through repetition, then that concept will hopefully be imprinted in a student’s mind. Praying continuously that students treat other with dignity and respect, for example, can make an indelible impression on the students and the professor.<sup>79</sup>

Prayer in the law school setting also influences how students will approach their careers. For example, one student discussed how prayer impacts that student’s view of the eventual practice of law, “[W]e can fight for our clients without being disrespectful to others in the court room. Praying before class is laying a foundation for our careers and I think more professors should embrace this practice.”<sup>80</sup> Another student similarly noted, “I think prayer instills integrity in all of us and having that reminder on a regular basis allows one to not only better ourselves as students but as citizens as well.”<sup>81</sup>

One of my former students participated in a school-sponsored mock interview to prepare for upcoming interviews in the legal market. The mock interviewer harassed my former student for his religious beliefs during the interview. Instead of retaliating or fighting back against the interviewer, the law student decided to treat his interviewer with dignity and respect. My former law student said that the prayer we spoke in class, which asks God to help us to always treat each other with dignity and respect, kept ringing through his mind as he decided to “turn the other cheek” by treating the caustic interviewer civilly despite being subjected to cruelty and indignity.<sup>82</sup>

Prayer also helps remind law students that they, as attorneys, have a responsibility to use their abilities and the privilege they have been given to practice law to help those in need of legal services.<sup>83</sup> As one student commented, “We also prayed for others based on current events and it

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79. Treating others with dignity and respect includes treating opposing counsel civilly, as well as clients and colleagues. See David A. Grenardo, *Why Should I Become an Associate at a Large Law Firm? And if I Do, Then What Should I Expect and how Do I Succeed?*, 41 RUTGERS L. REC. 65, 95 (2014) [hereinafter Grenardo, *Become an Associate*]. One can and should be aggressive as an attorney, but one can also be civil while providing powerful and adversarial representation. See David A. Grenardo, *Making Civility Mandatory: Moving from Aspired to Required*, 11 CARDOZO PUB. L. POL’Y & ETHICS J. 239, 277 (2013) (discussing numerous rules to follow to maintain civility with opposing counsel, such as ensuring communications with opposing counsel are courteous and civil, and being punctual and prepared). These principles can be encouraged through prayer.

80. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 122.

81. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 95.

82. *Matthew* 5:39 (Revised Standard, Catholic Edition) (referring to when someone has been wronged by another individual, i.e., slapped on the cheek, then the person wronged should not retaliate, but instead should offer the other cheek to the wrongdoer).

83. See MODEL RULES OF PROF’L CONDUCT R. 6.1 (2013); see also Grenardo, *Become an Associate*, *supra* note 79, at 97 (discussing the advantages of performing pro bono work).

reminded me that there is a whole world outside of law school and not to lose sight of the need to help others.”<sup>84</sup>

Professor Scott A. Taylor contends that faith integration and knowing what religion a professor is, which can be demonstrated through prayer, can make a law student a better lawyer:

If I were a law student, I would want to know the religious identity of my teacher as a way of gaining a fuller understanding of the underlying legal knowledge. . . . I actually think that these three teachers [Charles Darwin, Joseph Ratzinger, and Richard Dawkins], . . . would welcome considerations of faith and religion in their teaching which, in turn, would have enhanced their teaching and my learning. This would strengthen my moral compass and later make me a better lawyer: one who undertakes “problem solving with a moral compass in a legal context.”<sup>85</sup>

Professors demonstrating their faith through prayer can help make law students better people and better lawyers.

### III. RESPONSES TO REAL AND PERCEIVED DISADVANTAGES OF PRAYER IN THE CLASSROOM

Although the advantages of prayer in the classroom are numerous, there are real and perceived disadvantages. Each of the major disadvantages is discussed below. As with any approach or technique utilized by a professor in class, including prayer, there will always be some students who like the approach or technique used by the professor, and there will be those other students who do not. As always, professors must make a decision about what tools they will use to educate their students, including whether to use prayer.

#### A. *Prayer Marginalizes or Ostracizes Students*

Not everyone who attends a religiously affiliated law school is religious. As a result, some students may feel separate from the other students when a professor prays. One student stated the following:

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84. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 127.

85. Scott A. Taylor, *The Relevance of Faith Integration in Legal Education: An Essay*, 18 NOTTINGHAM L.J. 49, 54 (2009) (alteration in original); see also John W. Teeter, Jr., *Perils and Pontifications: Reflections on the Failures and Joys of a Law Teacher*, 37 S. ILL. U. L.J. 53, 66, (Fall 2012) (discussing how a professor can enhance his teaching and scholarship by embracing his own religion and religious beliefs).

I would be lying if I said that the prayers did not make me uncomfortable—I clearly do not run out of the room screaming or crying, but I am definitely uncomfortable when everyone is participating in prayer considering I have not voluntarily done anything with a religious affiliation in close to 10+ years.<sup>86</sup>

Another surveyed student believed that prayer somehow served as a screening mechanism. “It set a nice tone, but felt a little like a screening to determine the ‘in-group’ from the out-group. Can be isolating for those not in the in-group.”<sup>87</sup> Similarly, one student stated bluntly, “[A]s a non-Christian I can also say that it makes me feel alienated from my professor and those classmates of mine who are obviously very devout Christians.”<sup>88</sup>

Regardless of whatever statement or gesture a professor uses to reduce any feeling of awkwardness based on praying during class, a student may still feel uncomfortable about the prayer. Some people believe prayer is something that individuals should do on their own in private, and they feel uncomfortable praying with others, particularly strangers. Prayer can also be difficult for people who are not used to religious acts in public because of their religious (or non-religious) background. The discomfort an individual feels with prayer in the classroom can be analogized to the discomfort a law student faces with the process of the Socratic Method.

If a professor uses the Socratic Method and states that the purpose is to prepare students to “think on their feet” and analyze difficult material concisely, then a student may still feel awkward when attempting to answer questions in the Socratic Method because the student is uncomfortable with the process. Some law students may not be used to speaking publicly in front of strangers, and most have not experienced the Socratic Method prior to law school. Even though some students feel discomfort with the particular teaching tool employed—whether it is the Socratic Method or prayer—the professor must weigh the advantages and disadvantages to determine whether the teaching tool is worth using. The advantages of prayer heavily outweigh the disadvantages.

Moreover, although some students start off feeling a little awkward or uncomfortable with prayer, some of those students wind up truly enjoying or appreciating prayer at the beginning of class. This is natural as prayer connects people in a strong bond, and praying with someone or some people that you do not know can, at first, be uncomfortable. For example, one student stated the following:

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86. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 98.

87. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 145.

88. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 24.

Although I'm a Christian, I've grown up and [sic] attending only public schools and universities so it caught me off guard to pray at the beginning of a class, even though I am a practicing Christian. I'll admit it made me a little uncomfortable to pray with a body of people when I don't know what their religious beliefs are, but I've learned to really appreciate it, and it has helped me realize that my faith is something that should guide me through all events in my life, school-related or not.<sup>89</sup>

Even if a student never embraces prayer in the class, a professor should remember that the percentage of students who will feel uncomfortable will likely be small, and most students, regardless of their religious background, will not be surprised that there is prayer in a religiously affiliated law school.<sup>90</sup>

Also, professors must stay true to themselves and their institutions by following their conscience even if doing so makes some students feel uncomfortable. Professor Lee states, "Ultimately and inescapably, a Catholic law school must be Catholic. This does not require that it be isolated or exclusionary; in fact the opposite is more likely the case. But it does require that we preserve an environment in which those seeking God will be embraced and not rebuked."<sup>91</sup> Thus, if certain professors believe they should pray in class to obtain the benefits discussed in this article, then those professors should do so even though some students may feel uncomfortable.

Former Dean of Notre Dame Law School, Thomas Shaffer, posed the following scenario (based on an actual situation) about potentially upsetting law students not of the religion affiliated with the law school. Suppose a student told him as dean "that public manifestations of Roman Catholic Christianity at Notre Dame were, or might become, offensive to the Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu students we have, and that [Shaffer] should forbid such practices."<sup>92</sup> Shaffer said that one possible response could be that the law school "should take the feelings of our non-Catholic students into account, but not by pretending that our law school is not a Catholic institution."<sup>93</sup>

Several surveyed students believe that law schools should not be afraid to embrace their faith. For example, one student said, "I am a person of faith attending a campus of faith. I appreciate a university that is willing to

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89. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 103.

90. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 103.

91. Lee, *Catholic Legal Education*, *supra* note 57, at 588.

92. Thomas L. Shaffer, *Erastian and Sectarian Arguments in Religiously Affiliated American Law Schools*, 45 STAN. L. REV. 1859, 1867 (1993) (alteration in original).

93. *Id.*

take a stand during a time that it is increasing [sic] unpopular. More so than that[,] I am happy to have professors that are not afraid to share their faith.”<sup>94</sup> Another student observed, “I find it refreshing to see people actually doing what they believe in, rather than tiptoeing around it like what seems to be the norm.”<sup>95</sup>

Although some law students may not be comfortable with prayer, religiously affiliated law schools must still adhere to their basic tenets and promote their religion, which can include praying in class. Prayer at the beginning of class, however, should not be used to convert others. Prayer at religiously affiliated law schools by professors can show religious individuals of any faith that they can practice their particular religion while being attorneys. Prayer should encourage every individual to follow their own moral compass and to be the best individuals they can be, whether they consider themselves religious or not.

Some students may be uncomfortable with prayer in the classroom for personal reasons, while other students may feel that prayer should not be present in law schools at all.

#### B. *Law School Is Not the Appropriate Place to Pray*

Some students believe that law school, or any school, is not the appropriate place to pray. As one student stated:

While I do believe that the prayer enhanced the rapport of the classroom and served to uplift the ambience, I am an adamant believer in the separation of church and state. Despite the fact that we are at a Catholic [identifying information omitted] University, religion should not permeate into the classroom, much less be espoused by the professor. It is my personal opinion that religion has no place within the walls of the school.<sup>96</sup>

Another student similarly noted, “I do not mind those who are religious, but I FIRMLY believe in separation of church and state. Religion should be a personal experience that students partake in before or after class . . . . I do not think that religion belongs in any classroom, especially in a law classroom.”<sup>97</sup>

The argument of separation between church and state is founded on the Constitution, but it loses its appeal and power when the setting is a private,

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94. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 33.

95. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 23.

96. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 99.

97. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 98.

religiously affiliated law school. The Constitution itself ensures the right of private, religiously affiliated institutions to practice religious freedom without persecution. If prayer is not appropriate in a Catholic law school, then where is it appropriate? Professor Lee notes that there appears to be a strong concern “about the need for prayer in public schools and [an] apparent lack of concern about the need for it in Catholic law schools, [thus] one has reason to wonder whether the Christian world is more concerned that public schools are prayerful places than that Catholic law schools are prayerful.”<sup>98</sup>

If prayer truly represents a central feature of the Catholic religion, and all religions, and a law school maintains an affiliation with a religion, then why must that religious institution abandon that critical component of faith in the face of education? Indeed, since prayer remains vital to religion, the question should really be how could we abandon prayer when we are educating students in a religiously affiliated law school?

Several students mentioned that it is a privilege to be able to pray in law school because they attend a religiously affiliated law school where they can exercise their right to pray as opposed to if they attended a public school. In particular, one student stated, “We are so privileged to attend a religious law school and we should take advantage of the fact that the government cannot interfere and take away the power of prayer.”<sup>99</sup>

One surveyed student similarly stated, “I would rather enjoy more prayer in the classroom as I am privileged enough to attend a university that is able to allow it.”<sup>100</sup> Another student noted, “I was raised in a home where God always came first. It’s great to be able to exercise the ability to pray at the start of class.”<sup>101</sup>

Professor Lee challenges religiously affiliated law schools to reach their potential as communities of faith. “The religiously affiliated law school of today . . . must be more than a school open to all God’s people and tolerant of His voice. It must pursue a radical vision of faith and of community.”<sup>102</sup> He adds that a religiously affiliated law school “must not be content to use federal laws or ABA standards as an excuse for religious timidity. It must seek the limits of religious identity; while remaining true to its function as a law school, it must strive to grow in its mission of faith.”<sup>103</sup>

Professor Lee recounts a story from former Dean Shaffer of Notre Dame Law School, where a student questioned the Dean about the presence of

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98. Lee, *Catholic Legal Education*, *supra* note 57, at 588 (alteration in original).

99. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 82.

100. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 158.

101. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 108.

102. Lee, *Religiously Affiliated Law Schools Obsolete*, *supra* note 48, at 659.

103. *Id.*

crosses in classrooms and prayer at the beginning of some classes, and he responded by telling the student that such displays were not out of place at a Catholic law school named after the Virgin Mary.<sup>104</sup> Professor Lee posits that “one might well have wondered whether Christian students who had come to such a school because of the prayer and crucifixes would have felt out of place if those things had suddenly disappeared.”<sup>105</sup>

One surveyed student reflected that attitude with regard to when prayer is missing from class, “I am a Catholic and I chose my school for its religious identity. I am a bit upset when professors don’t begin with prayer.”<sup>106</sup>

Even some surveyed students who answered that they are indifferent to prayer stated that prayer in a religiously affiliated school is expected. For example, one student said, “I go to a religious law school, so a prayer at the beginning of class does not surprise or upset me. However, I have received most of my education in public schools, and there seems to be no difference whether or not we start with a prayer.”<sup>107</sup> Another student answered, “Personally Atheist, but it’s a Catholic school. I knew what I was getting into. I don’t feel like it affects me at all in any real fashion.”<sup>108</sup> Yet another student stated, “I chose to attend a religious school so I knew it would likely be something that would occur. I don’t usually participate, but I am more than fine with other people praying if that’s what they want to do.”<sup>109</sup>

Therefore, religiously affiliated law schools represent the ideal setting for prayer, and those who feel otherwise should expect public displays of religion, such as prayer, at these law schools. Similarly, professors at these law schools should not feel compelled to pray, but they should feel empowered to do so if they choose.

### C. *Prayer Adds Another Obligation to a Professor’s Class*

Some may argue that a professor should not be required to pray. The Author fully agrees with that argument. This article does not advocate that professors should be required to pray in law school. Prayer by professors in law schools should clearly be optional and not required by the administration. Prayer, instead, is something that law professors should feel that they are allowed to do, but not required to do. Prayer, as discussed thus far, can have an amazing impact on the law school classroom environment

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104. *See id.*

105. Lee, *Religiously Affiliated Law Schools Obsolete*, *supra* note 48, at 659.

106. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 20.

107. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 34.

108. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 40.

109. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 49.

and the students. A professor must make that choice personally whether prayer is a tool that she wants to employ.

Some may argue that professors are not preachers. Professors need not be preachers to pray with their classes. Prayer should be simple and come from the heart.<sup>110</sup> Professors should not feel pressured to come up with sermons to deliver to the students each class period.

Moreover, if a professor feels disingenuous praying before a law school class, then the professor should not pray. However, the professor should not stray from prayer simply because it may be awkward at first, as many teaching tools may feel awkward when first employed. Professors should feel freedom to pray if they wish in law school classes, as opposed to pressure to do so. If a professor does choose to pray in class, it will not serve as a waste of time.

#### D. *Prayer Wastes Time*

Some may argue that prayer is generally a waste of time in the school setting and that prayer does not lead to better grades or better lawyering.<sup>111</sup> In response to the issue of time, prayer can take anywhere from ten seconds to a minute. My prayers, for example, typically last between ten to twenty seconds. Even one minute of class adds up to only twenty-six minutes over a semester in a class that meets two times a week for one hour and fifty minutes for twenty-six classes. The total class time in such a class is 2,860 minutes. Twenty-six minutes equals less than one-percent of that class time. This is a miniscule amount of time, and based on the myriad of advantages to praying in class as set forth in this article, using that little time to pray may produce substantial benefits to the classroom environment and the law students.

In addition, professors and law students can take a minute or less to acknowledge God, ask for help, pray for others, and/or to give thanks. One student agreed, “Praying before class helped me prepare mentally and it

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110. 1 *Samuel* 1:13 (Revised Standard, Catholic Edition) (noting the significance of praying from the heart).

111. Professor Taylor tested the following hypothesis at St. Thomas School of Law: students who have a strong faith identity should do better than expected at a faith-based law school when compared to students with a weaker faith identity. Scott A. Taylor, *Spirituality and Academic Performance at a Catholic Law School: An Empirical Study*, 45 CAL. W. L. REV. 89, 91 (2008). His results, however, showed a negative correlation between a strong faith identity and academic performance at St. Thomas. *Id.* at 92. Taylor included prayer in general as an aspect of a strong faith identity in his study. *See id.* at 136. In a footnote, he briefly mentioned how most students enjoy the faith-based mission of St. Thomas Law School, while some do not. *Id.* at n.118. As an example of those who do not, Professor Taylor included a few of his students’ negative reactions to prayer in his Federal Income Tax class. *Id.* at n.118.

helped me to remember that no matter how busy, stressed, and tired we were, we needed to take time off for the important things.”<sup>112</sup>

In response to the argument that prayer does not lead to better grades or better lawyering, this article does not contend that prayer at the beginning of class can make a student perform better on law school exams. The numerous advantages discussed throughout this article, however, may improve the law students’ ability as attorneys to understand constituents who may be affected by their cases. Also, prayer can deepen law students’ faith as individuals making them more caring or more compassionate people, which they can then exhibit with their clients and witnesses. Clients want attorneys who genuinely care about the clients’ cases and the clients themselves. Prayer can help foster and facilitate that sincerity by attorneys.

This article illustrates a number of advantages to professors praying in law school classes, and those advantages clearly outweigh the disadvantages. The next section discusses how a professor who wants to pray in class, or one that already does, can best use this potent tool.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCORPORATING PRAYER INTO THE CLASSROOM

Based on my experience of praying in the classroom, speaking with other professors, and student responses and reaction to prayer in the classroom, below are recommended steps for incorporating prayer into the classroom.

First, the professor should explain on the first day of class that no one is required to pray—all that is required is that each student respect that moment of prayer through silence. Also, inform the students unequivocally that whether one prays or not has absolutely no impact on a student’s grade.

In an effort to reduce the possibility that some students may feel alienated or separate from the rest of the class, I do three main things. First, I always explicitly tell my students that they are not required to pray. Second, I tell them (and then show them) that the manner in which I pray prevents me from knowing who prays. In particular, when I pray, I keep my head down and refuse to see who is praying and who is not. All I ask at the beginning of the semester is that my students respect the other students who are praying. If everyone is remaining quiet during the prayer, which everyone does, I have no idea who is following my prayer, who is silently saying an individual prayer, who is silently embracing the prayer, or who is simply silently waiting for the prayer to end. Third, I treat each student with dignity and respect.

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112. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 135.

Although a law professor at a religious institution need not justify why the professor is praying because prayer is a core concept in many religions, professors should feel free to explain on the first day of the semester why they are choosing to pray at the beginning of class. This may help the students look forward to and appreciate the positive effects of prayer, and it will help set the tone of reverence, respect, and dignity in the classroom for the entire semester.

On the first day of class, I always stress the importance of creating a comfortable environment where students should feel free to take risks without worrying about recourse from other students. I make my expectations clear that students must treat each other with dignity and respect, which will help us create a more cohesive and comfortable learning environment.

Second, professors should be comfortable with whatever prayers they choose to do. I start my prayer by saying, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." I am simultaneously making the sign of the cross as I utter those words, which is a Catholic tradition. My typical prayer then follows: "Thank you, God, for this time together. Please help us to grow in wisdom and in love, and help us to always treat each other with dignity and respect."

I will also sometimes pray for specific people or areas of the world that are suffering, or I will pray in general for those who have passed away, the sick and the injured. For instance, in Fall 2013, one of my students asked me to pray for those who died and the others who were suffering in the Philippines because of the deadly typhoon. In Spring 2013, I prayed for those in Boston to continue to be "strong" after the explosions at the Boston Marathon. In addition, whenever a student tells me of a passing in the student's family or that a friend or family member was stricken by an illness, such as cancer, I will pray generally for loved ones who have passed away and for others who are sick or hurting. I will occasionally pray for the students to persevere and do their best in school. Regardless of what the professor prays for, one must be comfortable and sincere with what one is praying for because that sincerity will resonate with the students.

The professor should avoid political prayers or prayers that place students into different groups. For example, professors should avoid praying for Democrats or Republicans or for only Catholics or Baptists. The Catholic faith teaches inclusiveness, and professors of any faith should try to make everyone, regardless of their religion, background, ethnicity or race, feel welcome and a part of the class. One surveyed student pointed out that students appreciate the efforts of a professor to be inclusive, "There are

students of many faiths in our class, but my professor prayed in a way that everyone could relate to which was very nice and considerate of him.”<sup>113</sup>

Professors should also avoid allowing students to lead the prayer, which may lead to divisive prayers based on politics or otherwise, or it may result in unexpected prayers and unexpected consequences. Professors tend to want to control their classrooms entirely, and making sure that the professors are in charge of prayer helps facilitate that need. Professors can certainly, though, listen to any general prayer requests (e.g., to give the class peace or for victims of a hurricane) prior to class that students may have and include those prayers when the professors see fit.

Third, the professor should be consistent with prayer.<sup>114</sup> I always begin every law school class with a prayer. Students typically like routine. Also, anything worth doing is worth repeating. Just as professors reinforce concepts in each class, professors can reinforce the importance of praying by doing it each day in class.

It must be noted that my recommendations on how to incorporate prayer into the classroom are just that, and other professors may use an approach that is right for them. For example, there are law professors who use prayer in class, but they do not pray every single class.

My colleague, Professor Richard Flint, prays on occasion, rather than every class. He also provides a “Saint of the Day” for his classes, which further incorporates the Catholic faith into the classroom. Similarly, Professor LaGard Smith of Faulkner Law School chooses to pray with his class occasionally, because he believes it makes more of an impact than praying daily. In addition, Professor Smith ends most of his classes by drawing some spiritual parallel with the material that he and his class covered for the day. Professor Smith has received extremely favorable feedback based on his well-timed prayers and class-ending “Spiritual Applications.”<sup>115</sup>

Several surveyed students also expressed their preference for a variety of different prayers, rather than the same prayer every day.<sup>116</sup> Programs exist that professors can download on their phones (i.e., apps or applications) that include daily prayers, daily inspirational sayings, or daily verses from the Bible.

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113. See *infra* Appendix A, para. 173.

114. *Romans* 12:12 (Revised Standard, Catholic Edition) (stating “[r]ejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer”) (emphasis added).

115. Upon my request, Professor Smith graciously allowed me to share the way he incorporates prayer and faith into his classroom. Professor Flint and Professor Smith did not participate in the survey found in this article.

116. See *infra* Appendix A.

Thus, professors should feel confident in their decision to incorporate prayer into the classroom, regardless of exactly how they choose to do so.

### CONCLUSION

Professors at religiously affiliated law schools can reap the many benefits from praying in class with their students. This article discussed those numerous advantages, as well as the disadvantages that are heavily outweighed by the positives of prayer. The article also gave recommendations to professors who may want to improve their classrooms for their students, which included being comfortable with whatever prayers professors are sharing in class.

Professors at religiously affiliated law schools should always remember that they possess the right to pray in their classes, and most students will not only appreciate the prayers, but they will also yearn for them. Even though it may be daunting or scary for a professor to pray for the first time in class, the professor should possess the courage and confidence to pray in class to obtain the many benefits of prayer in the law school classroom.

One surveyed student succinctly captured the essence of prayer at law schools. “I think it’s a lost ideal/custom that not only should be incorporated at private Catholic institutions, but all over the country. It just instills a sense of a greater good and a greater sense of accountability in each individual. I pray that it spreads like a wildfire.”<sup>117</sup>

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117. *See infra* Appendix A, para. 131.

## APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESPONSES OF STUDENTS AT RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED LAW SCHOOLS<sup>†</sup>

### Survey Question

1. Did you like the fact that your professor prayed at the beginning of class?

Please explain:

Answer	Response	%
Yes	136	78%
No	12	7%
Indifferent	27	15%
Total	175	100%

1. Yes. Having gone to catholic school majority of my life, it is a comfort to know that professors pray before a class. If nothing else, it sets the tone and soothes me.
2. Yes. Good way to start the day. Helps calm me before diving into the stresses of everyday life as a law student. Refreshes me and gets me ready for the class discussion.
3. No. It makes no difference to me whether a professor prays before class. But the question is do I like it. No, not really. But I do not dislike it either. To me it is no different then a bell to signal the beginning of class.
4. Yes. For being fresh, remind the mission and responsibility
5. Indifferent. I'm not religious, but I'm fine with it since we are at a private catholic school.
6. Yes. Being Catholic and deciding to go to a Catholic law school, it is encouraging to know of the spiritual support of our professors and is a nice entry into the class time.
7. Indifferent.

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<sup>†</sup> The survey responses contained in Appendix A have been reproduced without significant change in order to better preserve the students' original responses. -EDS

8. Indifferent. I guess it just seems a little awkwardly placed and rushed through. Everyone is mid talking and he just starts saying a prayer and then it ends and we move on. It just doesn't really do much for me. I do have a class that starts with differing prayers and readings other than the same one every day and I like that a lot more and seems more engaging. I really wish i could appreciate the prayer at the beginning of class but its just so monotonous and rushed through
9. Yes. I enjoy that some professor start class with a prayer. Regardless of what others around me might think, I will make the sign of the cross every time.
10. Yes. Our twenty four hours windows are jam packed with events, and other encounters that leave us overwhelmed as well as diverted away from just taking a moment for ourselves. For some, the prayer is just a moment to take a breath before reconvening in the hecticness of the day. So, it serves the purpose of a moment of serenity for me in my day, and I truly appreciate that.
11. No. I'm a Jewish student who has gone to public school my entire life until law school. For these reasons, I find prayer inside the classroom pretty strange. Truthfully, I don't really care if a professor chooses to recite a prayer before class. It doesn't make me feel uncomfortable since I just sit there quietly and get my notes prepared for class. I only indicated "no" above because I find it pretty strange—I don't have very negative feelings about it. Some professors recite a different reading before class today (sometimes famous quotes by authors, clergy, or whoever). I actually like this practice a lot, since the readings are just generally inspirational or uplifting passages that are either secular or come from different religious backgrounds. Overall, though, it really doesn't matter to me whether or not a professor says a prayer before class.
12. Yes.
13. Yes.
14. Yes. When I made the conscious decision to go to a Catholic law school, I did not simply want to attend a school that had religious affiliations. I wanted to attend a school that visibly integrated faith into its teaching. While society and politics and education become more secularized and more people try to distance themselves from religion in favor of some mistaken higher science that allows them to reason away God and craft a world where they only have to answer to themselves because their reality makes them their own highest good, I know the man I would become if I made the world my own. Training to be a lawyer is learning to live in the grey areas of life; it is gaining

- proficiency in both virtue and villainy. While learning to zealously protect and defend a client's interests, I run the risk of beginning to believe that those interests are not only my interests but the best interests of society as a whole; legal education knowingly furthers that secularization so many people already seek. While I believe that through the intercession of prayer people can find healing and redemption, I pray before class not so God will expand my intellect but as a reminder that there is a Good greater than myself and it is against that Good that I will ultimately be measured. My greatest fear is not that I will fail as a lawyer but that through being a great lawyer I will fail as a man. Prayer is too often misunderstood as a simple petition for a favor or a plea in a time of need. Prayer is hope and strength. Prayer is an anchor.
15. No. I am not Catholic or Christian. It's exclusive, one sides, imposing. I don't disagree w ppl praying. I just don't think it's fair to ppl who are not catholic or who are not religious.
  16. Yes. It sets a tone, not simply for the class period, but for the school in general. When I'm in the building, I know that I am surrounded by people who, like myself, know that faith comes before study, and that makes law school a little less stressful.
  17. Yes.
  18. Indifferent.
  19. Indifferent.
  20. Yes. I am a Catholic and I chose my school for its religious identity. I am a bit upset when professors don't begin with prayer.
  21. No. I was raised catholic and would say that I am a decently faithful person. That being said, I don't think that prayer has a place in a classroom where all students come from different backgrounds and experiences. I have found that some of my classmates feel uncomfortable and as if they are being preached at or having religion forced upon them. Because of this, I think that prayer at the beginning of class reinforces stereotypes about "religious" individuals. Furthermore, I don't think that religion and education should be intertwined, especially at the graduate level.
  22. Yes. Praying at the beginning of class, especially in law school, is a great way to quiet the mind. I appreciate being reminded before every class why I am there and also opening up the day to God's will.
  23. Yes. I find it refreshing to see people actually doing what they believe in, rather than tiptoeing around it like what seems to be the norm.
  24. No. If there should be any type of "prayer" at all, I prefer professors who choose to read various readings submitted by students over the

- course of the semester. These seem to reflect the greater diversity of our class, and often reflect student's either inner reflections or reflections of what's going on in the outside world. But other than this, I don't really enjoy when my professors pray at the beginning of class. I know the act centers and brings peace to many people, but as a non-Christian I can also say that it makes me feel alienated from my professor and those classmates of mine who are obviously very devout Christians.
25. Yes.
  26. Yes.
  27. Yes.
  28. Indifferent.
  29. Yes.
  30. Indifferent. I like prayers that are specific to education, like the prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas. However whether my professor chooses to pray or not has no effect on me.
  31. Indifferent. I am an atheist at a Catholic law school and I do not care at all that professors pray before class.
  32. Yes. [Name of law school omitted] gave me the best scholarship offer and offers a very unique culture and atmosphere due to it being a Catholic university. You will not find these things anywhere else except a Catholic university, so prayer just comes with the territory.
  33. Yes. I am a person of faith attending a campus of faith. I appreciate a university that is willing to take a stand during a time that it is increasing unpopular. More so than that I am happy to have professors that are not afraid to share their faith.
  34. Indifferent. I go to a religious law school, so a prayer at the beginning of class does not surprise or upset me. However, I have received most of my education in public schools, and there seems to be no difference whether or not we start with a prayer.
  35. Yes. I'm actually not Catholic and overall not a very religious person. However, praying at the beginning of class is a really great way to take a breath and refocus on the goal of learning after the stress of the last class or the commute in. I appreciate that our professors take a moment to bring peace to the room before starting their lectures.
  36. Indifferent.
  37. Yes.
  38. No. As someone who came to my law school because I was told that it was inclusive of everybody, Christian or not, I feel that prayer before class brings too much religion in to the law school classroom.

39. No. I prefer when professors use texts or quotes from various inspirational sources and figures, rather than reading the same Catholic prayer every day.
40. Indifferent. Personally Atheist, but it's a Catholic school. I knew what I was getting into. I don't feel like it affects me at all in any real fashion.
41. Yes. Constant prayer is something I struggle with. When we begin any activity, when we are in the middle of an activity and when we finish an activity we should be in constant communication with God. I think prayer before our classes helps center myself and remember that all I am doing in class is a gift.
42. Yes. I think praying before class is calming and it brings us together as a class.
43. Yes. I find it to be soothing and it focuses me.
44. Yes.
45. Yes.
46. Indifferent.
47. Yes.
48. Yes.
49. Indifferent. I chose to attend a religious school so I knew it would likely be something that would occur. I don't usually participate, but I am more than fine with other people praying if that's what they want to do.
50. No.
51. Yes.
52. Yes. I chose to attend a Catholic law school for the faith aspects that are intertwined with education. I love that my professor takes a minute before class to pray.
53. Yes. Yes, it provides a starting point that gets everyone on the same page and ready to begin.
54. Yes. There seems to be more cohesion in class. Regardless of what religion you are from, prayer in class renders a more intimate atmosphere that everyone in class can relate to and you will never forget.
55. Yes.
56. Indifferent. As a student in a Catholic law school, I fully understand the religious aspect being taught and presented. I find the question of whether I like it to be slightly leading. I appreciate the indifferent answer. I do not openly embrace that the classroom is beholden to prayer, but I am content to sit in silent meditation and reflection.
57. Yes. Yes I do like how my law school professors begin each class with a prayer. Law school is a very stressed fulfilled experience and praying

- before each class calms my nerves and puts my mind in the right state to endure the law school classroom setting.
58. Yes. Prayer sets the tone, unites us all, puts our class into proper perspective, and prepares our minds.
  59. Indifferent. its very comforting to me, however, it can be offensive to people who do not believe in the exact way as you do, or they do not believe in the same religion. Assuming that all your students believe the same way or assuming that all your students believe the same religion, regardless if it's a Catholic school, is offensive.
  60. Yes. I think it really helps to keep what we are doing in perspective and forces me to think about how law school fits in to important things in my life such as God and family.
  61. Yes.
  62. Yes. I am Catholic and believe praying at the beginning of class is appropriate to coincide with the catholic tradition the school follows.
  63. Yes. I should say, in all fairness, that I am a devout Christian who already has a bias toward the subject. That being said, I like the little opportunities that are given throughout the day to bring everything back to God. It is easy to lose sight of Him in the midst of life, especially when life is as busy as law school. And I remember being told by a wise priest once "if the devil can't keep you sinning, he'll keep you busy." In my short span of life, I have come to recognize that the evil one tries to slowly draw you away from God. It is like that fable about the Sun and the Raincloud. The Raincloud, thinking he was so mighty, blew a mighty wind and a fierce storm to try and force the coat off of a man. But it was all in vain because the more he did, the tighter the man held on to his coat. Then the Sun came out and slowly warmed things up to the point where the man very willingly took off his coat. Prayer before classFalse. . .it keeps us on our toes and away from him who would have us remain idyl in our relationship with the Lord.
  64. Yes. I Christian not catholic, I love when there is a sincere prayer before class, but a mechanical repetition. Praying gives me comfort all the time. Since I am not catholic, it bothers me when professors repeat prayers , such as the rosary. [Identifying information omitted.] I have to put up catholic prayers, but I really appreciate those prayers from professors that are not catholic, which make me feel secure and peaceful before class.
  65. Yes. I enjoy when my professors begin class with prayer for a couple of reasons: 1) i feel a sense of peace; 2) it reminds mean of the religious foundation I was looking for when I chose to attend a religious law school; and 3) it helps me relate what we are learning with a biblical

- sense. If I can add, I most enjoy the personal prayers by the professors as opposed to recited prayers.
66. Yes.
  67. Yes. Prayer before class gives me tranquility and peace, specially if I feel nervous before a class or when I know I'll be on call. Some prayers offer me serenity and lift up my spirit when I am down or when I am going through a hard time.
  68. Yes. Law school is such a pressure cooker environment that sometimes gets the best of you. Having a professor pray before class sometimes calms, sometimes puts things in perspective, and sometimes just lets you know you are not alone in this crazy law school world.
  69. Yes.
  70. Yes. It has been spiritually lifting and it helps clear your mind and prepare your mind for the material you are going to learn in that class.
  71. Yes. I feel it gets me centered right before class.
  72. Yes. Yes because I am religious.
  73. Yes. Yes, it gives me time to reflect on why I am the way I am. I follow along and say the prayers because it is apart of who I am. We cannot forget the purpose for which we are alive, and there is no better way to get class started than with a prayer. Thank you and God Bless.
  74. Yes.
  75. Yes. My professor's prayer helps to prepare me spiritually and mentally to focus on the content and purpose of the class. Furthermore, it reminds me why I am in Law school and why I chose the law school am attending.
  76. Yes. I think that it is the best way to start the day and a class period. It helps students push aside their negative energies and refocus.
  77. Indifferent. It doesn't bother me nor do I insist on it. I think its nice but since I'm not Catholic I don't know most of the prayers they do except for Our Father.
  78. Yes. It gives you a chance to stop and be thankful.
  79. Indifferent.
  80. Yes.
  81. Yes.
  82. Yes. Prayer before class is what sets apart a private religious law school from the secular law schools. I think that beginning with a prayer really helps students calm down for a moment and recollect. We are so tired every day: studying, constantly under pressure, rushing all the time, but that prayer before class brings a moment of tranquility. [Information identifying law school omitted.] We are so privileged to

- attend a religious law school and we should take advantage of the fact that the government cannot interfere and take away the power of prayer.
83. Yes.
  84. Yes. At times, it is difficult to attend mass or chapel given the time restraints between family and school. By the professor reading the bible in class, it provides the opportunity, although short, to hear the word of God.
  85. Yes. As a Catholic law student, I was very encouraged by my professor beginning class with the Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas, and I participated in that. I think it's important to ask God to guide our class sessions.
  86. Yes. I greatly appreciate prayer before class, it reaffirms and enforces my religious practices. I appreciate the encouragement of religion in class.
  87. Yes. As a Christian it reminded me at the beginning of class that everything was in God's control and made me more confident during class. My confidence in class in a weird way also helped me to pay attention, and gather the info in a way that I understood.
  88. Indifferent. I do not pray with my professors, but it does not bother me that they do so.
  89. Yes. Prayer is a great way to bring focus and prospective to your mind before you start class. Prayer helps me to clear my mind about whatever I was thinking about before class starts and to focus on the task at hand. [Information identifying law school omitted.]
  90. Indifferent. I really do not have an issue with prayer before class sometimes I feel the message is needed and other times it is still okay.
  91. Yes. I think it is important because it puts everything into perspective. For me, faith comes first, family second, and law third.
  92. Yes. Praying reminds us of the reason we came to law school. It also gives us an opportunity to seek for understanding and reminds us that God is with us every moment of our lives.
  93. Yes. From a spiritual sense I feel that it is important to put God first in everything you do and I feel that praying before class helps to drive that point home. I feel it is especially useful at the beginning of a Law School class because of the anxiety that these classes can produce. I suffer from anxiety and like many, law school has greatly contributed to my disorder. I sometimes get anxiety before a class. The prayer helps put my anxiety at bay because it reminds me how insignificant this one 50 or 115 min. class is in the grand scheme of things and allows me to focus on the bigger picture. From an academic standpoint I feel that a quick meditation is good to help clear your head before class.

94. Yes. The prayer was a time to switch gears from outside conversations to class. The prayer gave me a moment to remember why I am in law school, and the privilege I have for being here.
95. Yes. Although I am not Christian or Catholic, I am a religious person and I feel any type of prayer is good to recite on a regular basis. I think prayer instills integrity in all of us and having that reminder on a regular basis allows one to not only better ourselves as students but as citizens as well.
96. Yes. As a catholic, it helped me integrate my faith into my law school experience. Law school is stressful and for me, prayer is a way to calm my nerves. It helps me feel at peace to integrate God, into the profession that I'm going to dedicate the rest of my life to.
97. Indifferent. I grew up Catholic, but drifted away from organized religion after I became an adult. I recognize that this is a Catholic institution and that may play a role for some students when choosing where to go to school, but not every student falls into this category. The prayer at the beginning of class does not bother or offend me because it does not take up very much class time and I appreciate the fact that many students do prefer it. As long as the people not participating are not treated differently, then I would not object to more professors having prayer at the beginning of class.
98. No. Three major points here: 1. I am not a Catholic. I am aware that I am attending a Catholic university, but I inquired as to whether or not religion was a "requirement" in the graduate programs before I made the decision to come here, and I was told it was not. If they had said it was a requirement, I am not sure if I would be here. 2. Regardless of my religious affiliation, I am not a religious person. I do not mind those who are religious, but I FIRMLY believe in separation of church and state. Religion should be a personal experience that students partake in before or after class. I would be lying if I said that the prayers did not make me uncomfortable - I clearly do not run out of the room screaming or crying, but I am definitely uncomfortable when everyone is participating in prayer considering I have not voluntarily done anything with a religious affiliation in close to 10+ years. 3. While I do not think that a lack of prayer will guarantee that someone is a good lawyer, I definitely do not believe there to be a correlation between prayer and being a good attorney, or any other type of occupation for that matter. I could be the greatest attorney, doctor, or janitor on earth without having a religious affiliation (and vice versa). I admire your dedication to your faith, and I LOVE the way you teach and your ability to effectively convey the information necessary to become a good attorney. However,

- I do not think that religion belongs in any classroom, especially in a law classroom. All that being said, if prayer becomes a bigger part of this school's program I will not be dropping out because I have already invested too much. So, this is not a life or death matter in my mind - just my opinion.
99. No. While I do believe that the prayer enhanced the rapport of the classroom and served to uplift the ambience, I am an adamant believer in the separation of church and state. Despite the fact that we are at a Catholic [identifying information omitted] University, religion should not permeate into the classroom, much less be espoused by the professor. It is my personal opinion that religion has no place within the walls of the school. Prayer, whether pro-Catholic, in support of JudeoChristian ideals or done in a non-denominational manner, has underlying religious tones that should be kept away from what would otherwise be an areligious entity (eg. schools.)
100. Yes. Professor, you have gained my respect by being an outstanding example of a leader, professional, family man, and also Christian. Although I am not a Catholic, I am a Christian (Non-Denominational) and believe in prayer. I do believe that you have set an example that has reached more lives than you could know, including myself. Also, I do think that prayer at the beginning of class does create a positive atmosphere that is absent without it. As much as prayer has an effect on the atmosphere of the classroom, your professionalism and persona also contributes. To me as a bible following believer I think most Christians do not "walk the walk" and by you doing that day in and day, God is allowed to show himself through that service. To answer the question, I did like prayer in class and believe that it has positive effects on the environment. I once ran into you before class and told you about some troubles that I was going through and you told me without even thinking twice about it to "Pray for Peace". Those simple words reminded me to cast my cares upon the Father and to always put Him first in my life. Something that I wasn't doing at time. Thanks for everything.
101. Yes. It gave an opportunity to relax and think about the important things outside of law school.
102. Yes.
103. Yes. Although I'm a Christian, I've grown up and attending only public schools and universities so it caught me off guard to pray at the beginning of a class, even though I am a practicing Christian. I'll admit it made me a little uncomfortable to pray with a body of people when I don't know what their religious beliefs are, but I've learned to really

- appreciate it, and it has helped me realize that my faith is something that should guide me through all events in my life, school-related or not.
104. Yes. It calms me down and allows me to gather my thoughts for the day. Reminds me to treat everyone with dignity and respect.
  105. Yes. I enjoyed the prayers before every class. I feel like it allows everyone to feel as though they are apart of the same thing and remind us that we are all in law school for the same reason. While some people may not associate themselves with a religion in particular or for the people that do it is a time for everyone to come together as one.
  106. Yes. Prayer provides for a foundation of focus and severity. Our future as attorneys is dependent on our ability to view ourselves as factors of justice. We must rely on the misfortune of others to succeed in this industry. The misfortune creates problems that need solving. It is crucial that we are reminded that our performance will determine the future of a few or many. Prayer allows for the centering of mind and the humbling of ego in order to think of law in a manner that promotes justice, rather than to think of law as means for gain.
  107. Yes. I love the fact that we pray before class! Law school is very stressful and demanding so it nice to be able to take just a few moments to close my eyes and feel peaceful in prayer. Also, our class prayer brings a sense of unity to our section. I am very thankful that Professor [name of professor omitted] has made prayer a part of our classroom routine and I wish more professors would do the same.
  108. Yes. I was raised in a home where God always came first. It's great to be able to exercise the ability to pray at the start of class.
  109. Indifferent. I don't consider myself religious,so I don't pray very often. I don't mind when others pray, nor do I mind participating. If someone wants to pray and doesn't force others to participate then I'm supportive of that choice. There's never any harm in prayer (for the most part) so in my mind there is nothing to be upset over if it is done before class. When the prayer is simple and kind it also helps students put things in perspective.
  110. Yes. It's the only time I actually remember to regard my faith.
  111. Yes. I enjoyed it but not because of the "communication with God." I felt that the prayer was more of a chance to communicate with oneself. Given we are constantly surrounded with exterior stimulation that manages to seep into out consciousness, it seems that we are never really allowed to turn the outside world off. Prayer or simply a moment of silence, I feel provides an opportunity to truly look into the mirror, and hopefully people like what they see. If they do not like it, this

- moment gives them an opportunity to make that assessment and begin to change it.
112. Yes. It was a well utilized moment to stop through the rigors and demands of law school. It was a moment of peace.
113. Yes. I think that prayer is a good way to reflect on one's personal values and to ensure that others recognize that as a class we will do our best to hold our peers and colleagues in high esteem and regard. Even though I do not necessarily pray on my own or believe in established religion, I think that it is important to reinforce those ideals of respect and dignity before jumping in to the material.
114. Yes.
115. Indifferent. At the beginning of the semester I found it to be a bit awkward and uncomfortable. It was very unusual for me, as [name of law school omitted] is my first religiously affiliated school. As the semester went on, and we became more and more comfortable with Professor [name of professor omitted], I felt the awkwardness less. The atmosphere of this class was an enjoyable one, but I couldn't tell you one way or the other the effect of the daily prayer on the atmosphere. Ultimately, I would choose not to have prayer before every class, but I respect Professor [name of professor omitted]'s decision to do so.
116. Yes. For people like myself who believe in the power of prayer, it was a great source of comfort to be able to take a minute before class to ask God to guide our learning and our treatment of one another. While it is true that we do work hard and construct our own lives, I believe much of our lives would not be possible without prayer. Prayer humbles us and allows us to put our faith into something much bigger than ourselves. So, being able to pray before class and combine the law school side of my life with the spiritual part of my life has helped me realize that those things can co-exist quite harmoniously. For those who do not believe in prayer or have different beliefs, I think taking a minute or two before class to be still and quiet can either give those people time to pray to the deity that they believe in, or to simply reflect, meditate, and gather their thoughts before diving into the law. In our class, I noticed that everyone in the room was respectful and quiet during the prayer. It was wonderful to see people from such diverse backgrounds all coming together to take a moment to breathe.
117. Yes. My mother says I'm Catholic, but to my dismay, I have yet to find a way to connect with my faith. I've tried. And tried. And tried; I just don't have that peace and I wish I did. Seeing and hearing Prof. [name of professor omitted] pray before class showed me it is real. It helps people in different ways.

118. Yes. Praying at the beginning of class provided me with a moment to remember that while we are working very hard, to develop a mastery of the law, we are still just normal people.
119. Yes. I agreed with all the factors you discussed in class. I thought the prayer itself was beautiful, and regardless of any religion was a general prayer that anyone would agree with. It created a safe class environment that made us all aware of each other and really made each of us respect the other and their comments or opinions. The prayer was also a great way to mentally prepare myself for the class. It became my habit that after every prayer, I could feel myself focus on the class immediately after. Finally, I think it showed how much you as a professor cared for your students, and that made us want to respect you even more and come prepared and ready for every class.
120. Yes. I chose to apply at [name of law school omitted] specifically because they are Catholic. Having chosen a Catholic university, I was pleased to find our class started with a prayer. The other classes while very informative and educational, could have taken place at any secular law school. Frequently, the only visible reminder of our religious affiliation is [identifying information omitted]. Catholics are synonymous with education and it should be possible to have more prayer without sacrificing any of our educational goals.
121. Yes. Praying before class definitely helped me to relax my mind and remind me as well that there was a bigger picture in the world and to put my situation into a frame of reference
122. Yes. I really enjoyed praying before class. Although I am not Catholic, I am a christian and I love being at a university that embraces christianity. Praying before class did several things for me: 1. Gave me a chance to settle down and get my mind prepared for class. 2. Reminded me to be respectful to my classmates and their ideas. 3. Helped me learn how to entwine my faith with being a future attorney. I completely agree with what my professor said in that we can fight for our clients without being disrespectful to others in the court room. Praying before class is laying a foundation for our careers and I think more professors should embrace this practice.
123. Yes. I loved the fact that we prayed at the beginning of class. I was not sure where I was going to end up going to law school but I felt compelled to [name of law school omitted] because of the Catholic background. Being in class and hearing that one does not have to put faith on the back burner to be a lawyer is comforting, as too often you hear bad connotations associated with the profession. I thoroughly enjoyed the prayer and wish more professors would do the same. The

- prayer before class helps calm the nerves and anxiety of public speaking as well as just changes the overall energy in the room. I would encourage the continuation of prayer before class.
124. Indifferent. I went to Catholic School for 12 years so it was familiar to me but I am a lapsed Catholic so it didn't really register. I'm too used to going through the motions.
125. Yes. I was raised catholic, and while I am still spiritual, I pray every morning and evening in a typically christian fashion, I do not subscribe to a particular religion. I do not attempt to know or define God, but I do seek to understand the teachings of Christ and to serve something bigger than myself. I believe that prayer before class reminds us that we are all here to serve and recognize something bigger than ourselves, whether it be our faith, the mass of knowledge that we are all attempting to undertake, the institution and minds who are taking the time and care to teach us, or simply our beliefs that have brought us to the classroom. I also think, if nothing else, prayer is a concentration of positive thought, time and energy; a small meditation of sorts. It requires the student to center themselves, briefly collect, and return to the present with a calmer mind, however short the prayer. I think prayer at the beginning of class is a very positive thing. Thank you for your work and dedication this semester.
126. Yes. I was taken aback at first, but afterwards I really appreciated the prayer before class, it made me feel at peace and calmer. Perhaps it has to do with personal and cultural background, but I think that regardless of religious beliefs it was a wonderful moment for mediation. A spiritual reminder that the professor was human, and that there is a greater purpose aided by a greater force. I loved it, and I appreciate the professor for making the call and allowing me to experience this.
127. Yes. I was raised in a faith based environment. I appreciated the time to re-center myself. We also prayed for others based on current events and it reminded me that there is a whole world outside of law school and not to lose sight of the need to help others. I think it also set an expectations of what the professor expected for class- an attitude of dignity and respect.
128. Yes. Prayer before class made the classroom environment feel more collaborative which is a nice change of pace considering we are all in constant competition with one another. It also allows students to take a step back and reflect briefly on life outside of school, that moment helps me to clear my mind before getting back to the grind.
129. Yes.
130. Yes.

131. Yes. I think it's a lost ideal/custom that not only should be incorporated at private Catholic institutions, but all over the country. It just instills a sense of a greater good and a greater sense of accountability in each individual. I pray that it spreads like a wildfire.
132. Yes. I am not a religious person by any means (I'm an atheist), but I appreciated the way a prayer at the beginning of class ended all conversations and focused the students on the subject at hand. I equate it to turning down the house-lights at a concert hall to make the audience shut up and listen.
133. Yes. Though I was raised Catholic, I have since distanced myself from the Church and taken a more agnostic view. Nonetheless, I recognize and appreciate many of the moral teachings from Catholicism. Praying at the beginning of class was a form of meditation to me—a time to put school on hold and remember what it means to be a good person, not just a good student. However, I can't say I'd feel this way if the content of the prayers became political or offensive to non-members of the Church.
134. Yes. I am not Catholic, but I am a Christian. I appreciate any time that is devoted to prayer. I especially appreciate it because of the ongoing trend of this nation—where open Christian beliefs and public prayer are looked at as faux pas. I believe that people often associate religious beliefs with lower intelligence, and so when there is an opportunity to show that someone with advanced education has religious beliefs, it causes skeptics to rethink their opinions. Additionally, prayer may spark interest in the underlying religion itself, and result in eternal salvation. The juice is definitely worth the squeeze.
135. Yes. Praying before class helped me prepare mentally and it helped me to remember that no matter how busy, stressed, and tired we were, we needed to take time off for the important things.
136. Yes. I felt that it gave me an opportunity to compose myself before class, I also gave me the opportunity to say my own personal prayer.
137. Yes.
138. Yes. I felt that the prayer at the beginning of class was always a nice reminder that no matter how hard the material became I would still be able to get through it. It also helped reaffirm the idea that the professor did care about the students and wanted to do his best to make sure everyone understood the material that we were covering in class.
139. Yes. Yes; as a Catholic, I appreciate every opportunity to continue strengthening my relationship with God. I also believe it provides a moment for us to put things in perspective and realize that although law school provides difficult challenges, there are others who are facing

- harsher more challenging moments in their lives. In addition, I think that it provides another opportunity for our class to become more of a community; although, we all have different beliefs, we do attend a Catholic law school, and studying here one should recognize that not only are we becoming lawyers. We are becoming lawyers with a unique perspective that embodies the characteristics of exceptional moral and ethical standards, and compassion for others. Preparing us not only for commercial success, but providing us with the exceptional abilities required for the challenge of serving the greater good.
140. Yes. Gives a chance to relax and get focused on preparing for the day. On a personal level, it reminds me not to forget God and the religious principles that I grew up on.
141. Yes. I appreciated the chance to focus on God and ask His blessing on our class.
142. Yes. I have always believed, there is nothing more powerful than the power of prayer. One of the reasons I came to [name of law school omitted] was for the fact that it was Catholic Institution and it gives their Professor's the right (if they choose to do so) to pray in their class. I truly believe choosing to do so has great intangible value in and out of the classroom. I have spoken with various 1L students and one thing that many of us have in common is that we are all nervous, for many reasons. Taking a few minutes before class to pray helped me, relax, gather my thoughts, and ultimately it took away any doubts that I had-it made me feel that I am exactly where God wants me to be.
143. Yes. I feel it helps bring the class together to focus.
144. Yes. I didnt mind it personally. Im Jewish thus, I wouldnt pray the same way but I didnt mind it. Thought it was nice for the class.
145. Indifferent. It set a nice tone, but felt a little like a screening to determine the "in-group" from the out-group. Can be isolating for those not in the in-group.
146. Yes. I thought the in-class prayers were great. I don't think I've ever had prayer before class in any educational environment prior to this semester. Clearly, it's a preference for religious individuals. I also think, for the non-religious, it's beneficial: a moment of calmness to catch your breath during the hustle of law school. For our class purposes, dignity and respect were the constant themes in the prayers, and that spilled over into our treatment of each other. It makes me wonder: would reciting the [name of particular professionalism rules/guidelines omitted] in front of a jury prior to beginning trial change the the interactions between the attorneys? Perhaps so, perhaps not, but I think forcing yourself to measure your actions against a higher level of

- decency and candor is typically a constructive process in any environment.
147. Yes.
  148. Yes. I come from a religious background and believe that prayer is a great way to create a sense of unity among the group. I also enjoy prayer because it speaks to me on a personal level.
  149. Yes. It was a good opportunity to take some time and think about life outside of law school. There is a lot of stress and we forget to take care of ourselves physically and spiritually. The prayers and the speeches by the professor made this class very special.
  150. Yes.
  151. Yes. It really helps when we are under so much stress, to take a moment to step back and breath.
  152. Yes. Although I am not Catholic, and it would be a stretch to equate my thoughts with any general religious belief, I very much liked the fact that we prayed at the beginning of class. I think it really pulled us together and very much reminded us that the legal profession does not have to be performed in the same way in that it is many times portrayed.
  153. Yes.
  154. Indifferent.
  155. Yes. It helped clear my mind and get me ready for the day's activities in class.
  156. Yes. It is always good to take a moment and relax before embarking on the day's journey. It is nice to see that prayer is still valued in some institutions no matter who you chose to pray to..
  157. Yes. Although I do not practice the Catholic faith (I grew up Southern Baptist and later non-denominational), I found the prayer to be focusing, and set a clear tone of respect, harmony, and focus. It added to the class in a positive was - yes we are all here pursuing our passions, and most are type-a personalities, but this may be done respectfully, and with an aura of honor, reverence and respect for those with and whom we serve.
  158. Yes. Even though I attend a private university where my Christian faith is celebrated openly, sometimes I feel as if it would not make a difference whether I was in a public university or not. Praying at the beginning of class made me aware of the lack of prayer throughout the rest of my school day. I understand that making prayer before class obligatory for professors might be somewhat demanding, but I also personally feel that it would be nice to pray before each class as it helps to remind me of one of the main reasons I chose to attend [name of law school omitted] over other public universities, the open celebration of

- Christianity. Praying before [identifying information omitted] class helped me to realize that oftentimes the students, and perhaps even some of the professors, get caught up with all of the studying and classwork and don't take the time to appreciate the fact that we are a part of a University that openly encourages us to practice our faith. I would rather enjoy more prayer in the classroom as I am privileged enough to attend a university that is able to allow it.
159. Yes. It encouraged the class to act in a serious manner and oriented us to be ready to learn and participate.
160. Yes. It gives you a piece of mind and clear head heading into class.
161. Indifferent. I think the prayers at the beginning of class are useful in calming the mind and making one think about morals.
162. Yes. Religion is important.
163. Yes. Here at [name of law school omitted], it gives the notion of what comes first.
164. Yes. It allows time for reflection, and that reflection provides a period which allows the class discussion topic to percolate in our consciousness which inhibits a more meaningful class. The prayer also frames the discussion, by putting God first we are reminded of our priorities.
165. Yes.
166. Yes. Prayer is very important to me! I chose the [name of school] for undergrad and law school because it is a Catholic university. [Information identifying law school omitted] reminds students that God is with them through every step of life! Prayer gives guidance, and guidance is the key to achievement; therefore, prayer is an important role in achieving success! :)
167. Yes. I feel like it brings the group together. It helps us feel more like a team.
168. Yes
169. Yes. It adds a sense of comfort and informality to the classroom.
170. No
171. No
172. Yes
173. Yes. Prayer is very powerful. I try to start every morning with prayer because I believe that when one prays, he or she is trying to stay positive. I believe one positive thought can change your whole day. When my professor prayed and taught us about St. Ignatius at the beginning of class, it was very refreshing and it is something I will always remember and try to do everyday. There are students of many

faiths in our class, but my professor prayed in a way that everyone could relate to which was very nice and considerate of him.

174. Indifferent

175. Yes