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The Sixth Annual John F. Scarpa Conference on Law, Politics, and Culture: A Celebration of the Work of John Finnis - Introduction

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John F. Scarpa Conference on Law, Politics, and Culture

INTRODUCTION

IN 2003, John F. Scarpa endowed a Chair in Catholic Legal Studies at Villanova University School of Law. The Scarpa Chair was the first of its kind in American legal education, and one of its principal aims is to encourage scholarly research and reflection that defy the usual borders that segregate law and religion. The annual John F. Scarpa Conference on Law, Politics, and Culture seeks to bring scholars of varied perspectives into conversation on questions that are both timely and enduring, with a special emphasis on those questions that are often submerged in the eye-catching but frequently flat-footed debates that dominate the headlines. The Conference is an opportunity to explore, refine, and apply the Catholic intellectual tradition, especially as it concerns law, in dialogue with scholars and public intellectuals of all faiths or no faith. From its beginning, the Scarpa Conference has enjoyed the support of some of our nation's greatest intellectuals, some of whom have also been devoted servants of the public and of the Church.

The famed American theologian Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., delivered the keynote address of the first Scarpa Conference, which was dedicated to exploring the role of the civil ruling authority in the modern state. The Conference papers were published in the *Villanova Law Review*. Cardinal Dulles died in 2008 at the age of 90. The second Scarpa Conference focused on the nature of the judicial function in our American constitutional democracy. Justice Antonin Scalia of the Supreme Court of the United States delivered the keynote address, famously remarking that “just as there is no Catholic way to cook a hamburger, there is no Catholic way to judge.” (Not all were convinced of this). The third annual Scarpa Conference considered the topic of the liberty of conscience. Professor Martha Nussbaum, the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago, delivered the keynote address and presented a spirited reply to the other speakers. The Conference papers were again published in the *Villanova Law Review*. The fourth Scarpa Conference differed from its three predecessors by being devoted not to a topic but, instead, to a man, University of Michigan law professor Joseph

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Vining, and to his path-breaking work on the legal form of thought. Vining delivered the keynote address, and all of the conference papers were again published in the *Villanova Law Review* and, later, as a book titled *Legal Affinities: Explorations in the Legal Form of Thought*. Those who experienced the Vining version of the Conference recall it as a magical occasion. The fifth Scarpa conference was dedicated to exploring the topics and themes of the much-discussed book *A Republic of Statutes: The New American Constitution* (2010) by Yale law professor William Eskridge and New York University law Professor John Ferejohn. The co-authors collaborated in delivering a keynote address that assured a vigorous and valuable discussion, not to mention especially memorable interventions by legendary Columbia law professor Henry Paul Monaghan.

The sixth Scarpa Conference was dedicated to study of the work of John M. Finnis, Biolchini Professor of Law at Notre Dame Law School and Professor of Law and Legal Philosophy in the University of Oxford. The Conference coincided with Oxford University Press's publication of the five volumes of the *Collected Essays of John Finnis* and a new edition of Finnis's now-classic book *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, first published by Oxford in 1980. The Conference papers, now collected here, reflect just some of the extraordinary range of Professor Finnis's work. Professor Finnis combines careful thought with generosity of spirit in a way that cannot but inspire those who are privileged to interact with him.

I am pleased to have this occasion to thank John Scarpa once more for making all of this possible in the first place. I also offer my thanks to the Villanova students and staff who support the work of the Conference, including by producing this volume that shares with the outside world what we at Villanova do as a community.

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