

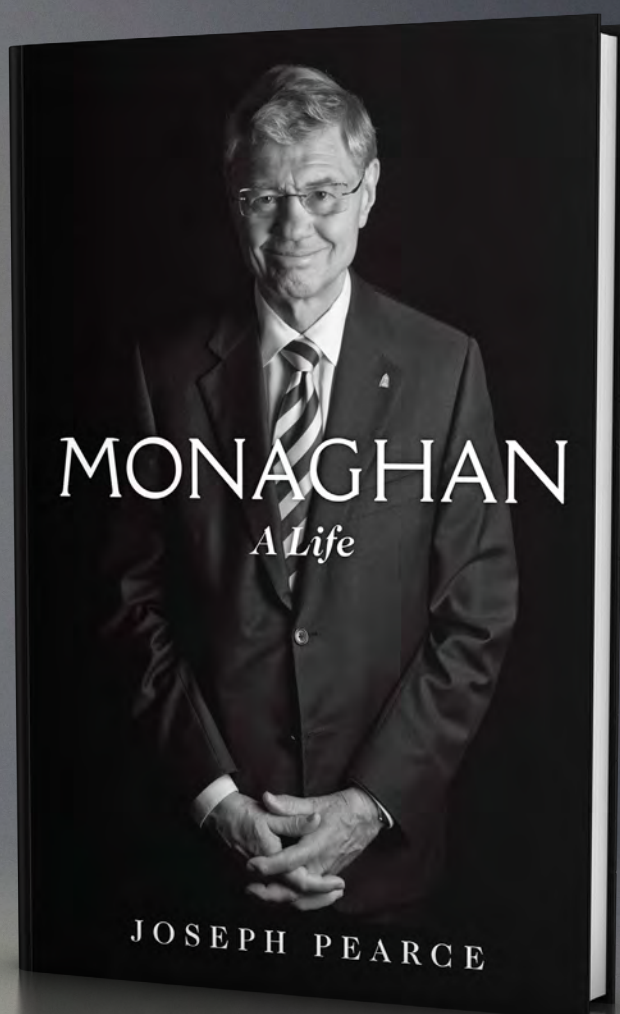
FAITH MATTERS

ISSUE 20

A PUBLICATION OF AVE MARIA MUTUAL FUNDS

THE DEFINITIVE MONAGHAN BIOGRAPHY

BY KATHY SCHIFFER





**JOSEPH PEARCE'S NEW
BOOK IS OVERWHELMINGLY
POSITIVE, BECAUSE
TOM MONAGHAN'S
CHARITABLE WORK HAS
BORNE MUCH FRUIT**

Thomas S. Monaghan, founder of Domino's Pizza as well as Ave Maria University and a whole bunch of Catholic apostolates, was my boss for seven years; yet even today, he remains an enigma. That's why I enjoyed Joseph Pearce's biography *Monaghan: A Life* (Tan Books, 2016).

This isn't the first story of Tom's life to cross my desk; but it's the first one that really reaches into the heart of the guy I saw every day in the halls at Domino's Farms, and with whom I and my co-workers prayed the Liturgy of the Hours and attended daily Mass in Tom's corporate chapel.

The autobiographical *Pizza Tiger*, co-authored by Monaghan with Robert

Anderson and published in 1986, was the first retelling of Monaghan's story; but it was written before Tom's 1989 "millionaire's vow of poverty" and it was, by Tom's own admission, "somewhat of an ego trip." I was struck by the frequency with which it used the first-person pronoun: "I thought," "I went," "I had..."

Don't get me wrong: *Pizza Tiger* is full of facts, talking about Tom's business acumen in growing the Domino's Pizza empire, and later, his ownership of the Detroit Tigers baseball team. But Monaghan did move on. After reading *The Catholic Classics*, a two-volume collection of essays by Dinesh D'Souza on great Catholic thinkers, Monaghan was particularly impressed by a passage from C.S. Lewis, the only Protestant scholar in the collection. Peter J. Boyer wrote about Monaghan's new insight in *The New Yorker*:

Lewis proposed that, in the scheme of Christian morality, pride — the sin of self-regard — was "the great sin." He wrote that pride was "the essential vice, the utmost evil... It was through Pride that the devil became the devil; Pride leads to every other vice; it is the complete anti-God state of mind." A rich man's striving for greater wealth, Lewis contended, was not greed but pride.

Finally this new biography, *Monaghan: A Life*, tells the dramatic story of the billionaire who is determined to give it all away to build the Church, and who — as *The Detroit Free Press* first



reported – wants to die broke. And as a Catholic thinker, Joseph Pearce is the perfect writer to tackle Mr. Monaghan’s complicated history. Pearce, author of over 20 books, is Director of the Center for Faith and Culture and Writer in Residence at Aquinas College in Nashville, Tennessee. I appreciated his ability to report on Tom’s business philosophy in light of Catholic teaching on subsidiarity, as explained in the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* and the Catechism of the Catholic Church; to explain how the things of this world became less and less important in Tom’s eyes as the things of heaven grew in importance.

Early in his life, while a young man serving in the Marine Corps, Tom Monaghan identified what he called the “five priorities” that would govern his life: spiritual, social, mental, physical, and financial. Joseph Pearce interviewed him about those priorities:

“Always being ambitious, I wanted to include the financial goal,” Tom explains, “I found a way to do it. Put it in its place. Money is not in itself evil. It’s neutral. The love of money is evil. Money buys many good things: hospitals, Bibles, churches, et cetera. It’s a tool to do good in the right person’s hands. By having one’s priorities straight, money can serve a good purpose.”

There were many places in this book where something I already knew – a

story I’d heard while at Domino’s Farms – was enhanced and enlarged. Sometimes it was the other way around: Working in the office next door to Tom’s, I had an inside scoop that further explained an anecdote from the book. That gold Swiss Patek Philippe watch that Tom unceremoniously stashed in a fishing tackle box in the stockroom? He bought it for \$5,000 from a friend in 1979. That race car on display in one of Domino’s Farms’ many lobbies? That was the Domino’s Pizza Hot One, which two-time Indianapolis 500 winner Al Unser drove to a second-place finish in the 1985 Indy 500 competition. Tom had owned the Detroit Tigers; and there, in his office waiting area, was the familiar World Series trophy to prove it.

But the most heartening parts of the story involved the many great initiatives Tom envisioned or supported, which enriched the Catholic world. Tom’s founding of Legatus, the international organization of Catholic CEOs who seek to “learn, live and spread the faith” in their professional and personal lives. His funding of computers for the Vatican, and his financial support which made possible the Catechism of the Catholic Church. His philanthropic efforts in Honduras, where he helped his friend Father Enrique by buying him a four-wheel-drive pickup truck, so that he no longer needed to travel by mule through the mountainous terrain and could now visit all the villages in his parish in a single day, compared to the

three days it had taken previously. The erection of a cathedral in Nicaragua. His financial support for the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, and the founding of the Spiritus Sanctus Academies.

I had worked for five years at the University of Detroit Mercy, and I remember when five law professors whom I considered friends were fired by the university for publicly protesting the law school's decision to invite the Michigan Supreme Court justice, who had written decisions upholding abortion and euthanasia, to speak at the school's annual "Red Mass." Joseph Pearce tells the story of how those five professors, plus a top-flight list of faculty including Judge Robert Bork, were brought in to teach at what would become the Ave Maria School of Law. Included among the esteemed lawyers who served on the law school's board were Helen Alvare, who worked at the U.S. Bishops' Pro-Life Office; Gerard Bradley, professor of law at the University of Notre Dame; Archbishop Charles Chaput, then archbishop of Denver; the Honorable William Clark, former US secretary of the interior under President Reagan; Fr. Joseph Fessio, founder and editor of Ignatius Press; Robert George, holder of the McCormick Chair in Jurisprudence at Princeton; Representative Henry Hyde, US congressman from the Sixth District of Illinois; Adam Cardinal Maida, archbishop of Detroit (an attorney); John Cardinal

O'Connor, archbishop of New York; Charles Rice, professor of law at the University of Notre Dame; the Honorable James Ryan, judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit; and Fr. Michael Scanlan (an attorney), president of Franciscan University of Steubenville.

Reading *Monaghan: A Life*, I gained a greater respect for Marge Monaghan, Tom's beloved wife. During my years on staff in Ann Arbor, Marge worked in the accounting department at Domino's; and she loved to visit our Legatus office to personally deliver paychecks. Marge had a great sense of humor (or perhaps irony); living in a home in the Prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright, working in a Wright-inspired office building, Marge would tell anyone who asked, "I HATE Frank Lloyd Wright!" And despite her husband's insistence on "appropriate" apparel for business – white shirts, solid-color ties, black shoes and socks – Marge was happy attending a Legatus conference in her chartreuse stretch slacks.

Pearce's book is overwhelmingly positive, because Tom's charitable work has borne much fruit. At the same time, he's not afraid to tackle the controversies, such as the opposition by faculty and staff when Tom decided to relocate the college (and other Catholic entities under his wing) to Florida. The book is fair, and it's compelling – because Tom's story is compelling. God bless you, Mr. Monaghan.



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Kathy Schiffer is a blogger at the National Catholic Register and on her personal blog, Seasons of Grace. Her articles have appeared in the National Catholic Register, Aleteia, Zenit, the Michigan Catholic, Legatus Magazine, and other Catholic publications. She's worked for Catholic and other Christian ministries since 1988, as radio producer, director of special events and media relations coordinator. Kathy and her husband, Deacon Jerry Schiffer, have three adult children.



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