

# FAITH MATTERS

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## A SENSE OF PURPOSE

BY ELIZABETH BOO  
NEUBERGER

Movements start with a sense of purpose. Catholic Extension was founded in 1905 when Father Francis Clement Kelley discovered that people in rural America did not have the necessities of the Catholic faith: priests, churches and ministries. He wanted to bring the Church to places where — with a little financial help — it could grow.

He believed it was the responsibility of other Catholics to pitch in. Father Kelley had a deep sense of purpose.

The movement continues today because the needs of Catholics in mission dioceses remain high and the funding gap persists.

As a nonprofit, Catholic Extension, and its role in bringing together people of faith and funding their

needs, is unique within the Catholic Church.

In the private sector, a different movement was started, which also serves Catholics in a unique way.

George Schwartz, chairman and CEO of Schwartz Investment Counsel, Inc., saw the need to provide clients with investment opportunities in companies that follow the teachings of the Catholic Church. No one was doing this, and he wanted to connect the world of investments to the world of Catholic morality.

In 2001, he founded Ave Maria Mutual Funds to offer morally responsible investments. Based in Plymouth, Michigan, the firm screens out of its portfolio companies that violate core principles of the Catholic Church. It has a





“WE DON’T HAVE TO LOOK OVERSEAS TO MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE POOR. OFTEN THE NEED IS MUCH CLOSER TO HOME, AND OFTEN CATHOLIC EXTENSION IS THERE ANSWERING THE CALL.”

**-MICHAEL SCHWARTZ**

diverse group of five funds, each with a separate investment objective, that allow investors to align their financial goals with values of the Church.

“With these pro-life, pro-family mutual funds, we are creating a movement of investors who are motivated by religious commitment to exert pressure on the business community for the sake of positive moral change,” Schwartz said. Among its employees of professional money managers and analysts are George’s five adult children — three sons and two daughters.

### **THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF FAITH**

Believing in the power of faith, it is easy to see why the Schwartz family is interested in supporting the mission of Catholic Extension.

The family appreciates the unique

focus that Catholic Extension brings to the poorest dioceses in America. “We recognize the positive impact the Church and Catholic Extension can have on families and communities throughout the country,” said son Michael, senior vice president and national sales manager.

“By building churches and educating seminarians, Catholic Extension quenches both the physical and spiritual needs of these dioceses,” he continued. “History teaches us that where the Catholic Church grows, communities as a whole thrive.”

The Schwartz family shares Catholic Extension’s conviction that as Catholics, people are responsible for helping others. “As Christians, we are called upon to act,” said George, the patriarch. He believes that faith gives strength and optimism, both in business and daily life. “It is Christianity, with its insistence on the transformative power of faith and individual moral

responsibility, that makes such confidence possible,” he said.

## USING FAITH AS A COMPASS

Growing up in a Catholic family in Detroit and attending 16 years of Catholic education, George recognized the importance of faith from an early age. He married his wife, Judi, who shared his passion for Catholicism, and they raised their children in a faith-filled home.

“Our parents gave us the gift of faith through the example they set,” said Michael.

When George started Ave Maria Mutual Funds to encourage others to use their religious beliefs to steer their business decisions, as he did, one of his first moves was to create an advisory board with nationally recognized Catholic leaders to guide the firm.

Clients have responded positively to this investment model. The funds have more than \$2 billion in assets and more than 100,000 shareholders. When surveyed, 98 percent say the Catholic benchmarks are a key reason for choosing the Ave Maria Mutual Funds.

Additionally, the firm stewards its clients through a series of newsletters called Faith Matters, written by prominent Catholics. The newslet-

ters provide a forum to discuss pivotal issues facing Catholics today and keep the faith front and center in the firm’s interactions with investors.

Schwartz is often asked if following one’s conscience in business means making trade-offs with profitability. “No,” he said. “Following a moral imperative does not mean we are sacrificing good results.”

In his 2010 book, *Good Returns: Making Money by Morally Responsible Investing*, Schwartz said, “We identify companies with both good investment merits and policies that are consistent with core principles of the Catholic Church, and we’ve had no problem producing favorable results for our shareholders.”

The firm has 22 employees between the Michigan headquarters and a branch in Ave Maria, Florida. In addition to serving individuals, their clients include hundreds of Catholic institutions and dozens of dioceses, including the Archdiocese of Chicago.

“Not only do we practice faith as we raise our own families,” said Michael, “but we rely on our faith to conduct our practice. The two go hand in hand.”

Together the Schwartz family and Catholic Extension are building up the faith lives of individuals and communities throughout America and investing in the future of the Catholic Church.





## ELIZABETH BOO NEUBERGER

Elizabeth joined Catholic Extension in 2014 and is editor of its quarterly magazine, *Extension*. She is a storyteller and writes many of Catholic Extension's stories for publications, news outlets and social media. Previously, she was director of ecotourism for World Wildlife Fund in Washington, D.C. and author of *Ecotourism: Potentials and Pitfalls*.

Elizabeth received a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Notre Dame and a master's degree in International Affairs from George Washington University.



Schwartz Investment Counsel, Inc., a registered investment adviser established in 1980, serves as investment adviser for Ave Maria Mutual Funds and invests only in securities that meet the Funds' investment and religious requirements. The returns may be lower or higher than if decisions were based solely on investment considerations. The Funds' method of security selection may or may not be successful and the Funds may underperform or outperform the stock market as a whole. All mutual funds are subject to market risk, including possible loss of principal.

**Request a prospectus, which includes investment objectives, risks, fees, expenses and other information that you should read and consider carefully before investing. The prospectus can be obtained by calling 1-866-283-6274 or it can be viewed at [www.avemariafunds.com](http://www.avemariafunds.com).**