



July 28, 2023

The Spirituality Committee of the  
Catholic Bar Association presents  
a Book Review of

## A SABBATH SHARED

By Father Chet Snyder

Reviewed by Michael Scarinci of the  
St. Thomas More Society of Central Pennsylvania

We have already heard some of the stories and seen a few of the photos from our members' pilgrimage to England to visit the seminal places of St. Thomas More's life. We look forward to hearing more about their experiences when we meet again in October for our annual conference. In the meantime, consider a pilgrimage of another sort.

In 2007, during the pontificate of Benedict XVI, Father Chester Snyder, a priest of the Diocese of Harrisburg, took a five-month sabbatical. He traveled to Rome, Jerusalem, Istanbul, Greece, and London, following in the footsteps of our Lord, St.

Peter, and St. Paul. He recounts his journeys in a spiritual travelogue: *A Sabbath Shared* (Author House, 2008).

The purpose of a pilgrimage," Father Snyder tells the reader, "is not to visit a place; it is to find God: the God made visible in His Son Jesus." P. 71. Father Snyder takes as his model, our Lord, who "was able to look at the world around him and draw spiritual insights from even the simplest of things: the lilies of the field, a mustard seed, a barren fig tree." P. 72. In his travels, Father Snyder finds our Lord in many places, and in all things.

At the Tower of David, Father Snyder, who has a fear of heights, finds himself "on top of an open metal stairway hanging on the side of one of the tower walls." P. 72. Turning around would have meant ending the tour early. Rather than doing that, Father Snyder holds onto both rails and looks straight ahead. That works but then an employee starts coming up the stairs. Father lets go of one railing and, ultimately, makes his way to the bottom of the stairs. From this he learns that when the open metal staircases of life show up, he must decide if he is going to let an irrational fear stop him in his tracks or is he going to let go, remembering, as the hymnist sings, that God goes before you always. P. 74.

At the Church of All Nations in the Garden of Gethsemane, while reading St. Mark's account, Father Snyder is reminded that there are "forces in our world that keep [him] from being 'watchful and prayerful.'" P. 154. For him (and for this reviewer), this means staying "attuned to what is important, what is essential." Ibid. Priorities must be established. Not everything that comes one's

way, even “good things that need to be done,” are entitled to “equal weight,” especially when they leave no time “for study, for prayer, for rest.” Ibid.

Finally, Father Snyder finds a spiritual insight even in a sewing kit in his hotel room. With a button coming off his shirt, Father attempts to use a small sewing kit he packed, but threading the needle is difficult and frustrating. He discovers a sewing kit in his room, provided by the hotel, with the needles already threaded. Father recognizes that God’s grace is like the needle already threaded. We face obstacles and challenges, but “most of the time we are going to find that the needle has already been threaded and that we have been provided with enough grace to meet the challenge at hand.” P. 235.

In addition to Father Snyder’s many spiritual insights, this book is filled with light-hearted antidotes. He recounts his dining experiences in Rome, that going to an Italian restaurant “is like going to church,” with tradition and ritual. P. 58. Several of the vignettes concern his adventures in haggling over a rug, which are delightful.

Father Snyder passed away on May 15, 2023. He was remembered in the local diocesan newspaper as a “gentle confessor, passionate preacher, and skilled teacher of the Faith.”

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

*A Sabbath Shared* is available on Amazon.