

# Messenger

INTERNATIONAL EDITION



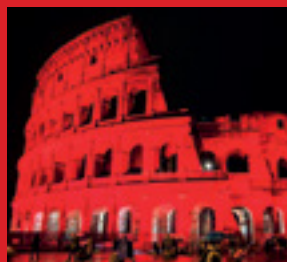
## *of Saint Anthony*

John Studzinski  
Banker &  
Philanthropist



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MAY 2018



# GOD & I: John Studzinski, CBE

*The Anglo-American investment banker and philanthropist talks about God, time, talent and treasure*

By Mario Conte, OFM Conv.

**Y**OU ARE unquestionably one of the world's leaders in business, finance and philanthropy. Did you have to overcome difficult moments and circumstances in order to reach this position?

If one incorporates a certain amount of discipline and structure into one's life, and does this every day, then personal moments of triumph and of suffering are no longer of decisive importance.

I've been very disciplined since I was a 6-year-old child. I grew up in a simple, working-class Polish Catholic family where there was a very strong sense of faith. It was the Church, the community and the extended family that mattered to us, and these three were also mutually supportive, so I grew up in a very strong network of love and support which allowed me to see things in a very constructive way.

At a young age I already had a strong sense of God's purpose for me, which was to pray hard, work hard, and help people. The 'pray hard' came from my mother's example; she prayed for at least half an hour in the morning and at least half an hour at night. We regularly went to Church, not just once a week, but regularly. There was also a sense of community in our attempts to help the marginalized and the poor; even those who were not wealthy were expected to share because one was a part of a community.

**What helped you to overcome the obstacles you met in your career and in life generally?**

I have had few real obstacles in life. Life, of course, does have its gifts, its challenges, and its tragedies, but I have not had great tragedies in my life, even though I have lost a number of family members. Both my parents are now deceased, but they were both very close to God, and both had peaceful deaths.

I've always been a great fan of Father Timothy Radcliffe, who was once Master of the Order of Preachers (the Dominicans). He coined the phrase, "Don't drag that cross, pick it up and carry it." My mother was very much that way; she used to say, "Whatever you have in life God gives it to you as a challenge."

I did well at school, and eventually I ended up on Wall Street with a very good job at Morgan Stanley. This was due in part to the power of the Holy Spirit because of the intervention of serendipity as one of the factors that led to my getting that job. I

had no interest in finance and Wall Street – it just so happened that one day someone offered me an interview at Morgan Stanley. The interview went very well and so they offered me a placement.

**Do you find it easy to talk about God with other people, or do you find that this is a kind of a taboo subject in social conversations?**



God has always been my anchor, and I have never had any difficulty in talking about God in social conversations. However, you have to make a distinction between talking about organized religion – which some people see as a political structure having to do with power and control – and talking about faith, which is something very personal and private, and has to do with your own personal relationship with God. This distinction is important because people will often use political reasons to disparage religion, based on the historic misdeeds of religion.

I am very comfortable in my relationship with God, and in God's relationship with me, even though I too have had my "Dark Night of the Soul", as St John of the Cross described it. But there is a difference between talking of God with other people on the one hand, and preaching or trying to convert on the other. I never try to convert anyone, and I do not preach to other people either; however, if people ask me to talk about God I will do so.

People generally know that I am a faith-oriented person, and sometimes people even ask me to pray for them. When this happens I always promise them my prayers, but at the same time I warn them that prayer must start with them as individuals.

**What image do you have of God? And what space is there for him in your inner life?**

God is the focal point of my life, both directly and subliminally. God is not an ethnic event or a social event or a community event or even a religious event, God is something that is the glue of humanity. It is especially the Holy Spirit that is the glue of this conversation we're having now. The Holy Spirit allows people to have relationships with each other because that is the essence of how two souls communicate.

**JOHN J. STUDZINSKI**, CBE, is Vice Chairman, Investor Relations and Business Development and Senior Managing Director of Blackstone. Mr Studzinski joined Blackstone in 2006 as Global Head of Blackstone Advisory Partners, which he ran for a decade. A graduate of Bowdoin College, he also has an MBA from the University of Chicago. He joined Morgan Stanley in New York in 1980, but has spent much of his career in London, as Head of European Investment Banking and Deputy Chairman of Morgan Stanley International before moving to HSBC in 2003 as a member of the Group Management Board.

Mr Studzinski is a Non-Executive Director of the UK Home Office and serves as Chair of the Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee, and of the Prime Minister's *Business Against Modern Slavery* initiative. He is Founder and Chairman of the *Genesis Foundation*, a UK charity which assists outstanding young artists, and Chairman of *Create London*. He serves on the US boards of *The J. Paul Getty Trust*, *Scholars at Risk*, *Tate Americas Foundation*, *Signature Theatre*, and the *Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies*.

He is Director Emeritus of *Human Rights Watch* and Co-founder and Chair of the *Arise Foundation*. He is also Vice Chairman of *The Atlantic Council* and a member of *The Council on Foreign Relations*.

Mr Studzinski is a *Knight of the Order of St. Gregory* and a *Knight Commander of Saint Sylvester* and in 2004 was awarded the Beacon Prize for Philanthropy. He received the Prince of Wales Medal for Arts Philanthropy and the Prince of Wales Ambassador Award for his work with the homeless. In 2007 Mr Studzinski was voted Banker of the Year by the Bank of England. In 2008, he was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) for services to the Arts and Charity. He was named Catholic of the Year for 2017 by the *Catholic Herald*. He also received the Mont Blanc Award for Philanthropy in 2017.



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#### What does prayer mean to you?

Prayer is a conversation, a two-way dialogue with God, but I pray for different things at different moments of the day and days of the week. You have your cup, and your cup is sometimes full and there is no room for God's words to fill the cup; but sometimes your cup is empty and then the

cup is filled with God's words. Sometimes during prayer you're inspired and the conversation with God allows you to go in one direction or another. Prayer is the building block of our relationship with God.

**Was there a particular moment in your life when you felt that God was particularly close to you?**

I have had a number of dramatic moments in my life, but one of the most dramatic occurred on 17 May 1987 when I had a car accident on the autobahn in Frankfurt, Germany. I was being driven, and about nine people died as a consequence of that car accident. In contemporary language I had what could be described as a "near-death experience". During that experience I had no pain, and I felt in the presence of God. I experienced a lot of positive energy and comfort; it was like being in a warm bath, despite the fact that I had three broken ribs,



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**In October 2017 John Studzinski was awarded the UK Montblanc de la Culture Arts Patronage Award for philanthropy**





*Those who have God find they lack nothing is one of Studzinski's favourite sayings*

my left arm fractured in 35 places, and my right shoulder fractured in four places. I was unconscious for about 30 seconds, and during this time I felt cradled by God or his angels, and I had the feeling of being told that it was not time for me to die yet; that I had a few more things to do on earth before then.

**You are Director Emeritus of Human Rights Watch and co-founder of the ARISE FOUNDATION, which partners with local networks to stop human trafficking. You are also involved with Talitha Kum, an organization of religious nuns which combats sex trafficking and rescues victims. What motivates you to work toward combating human trafficking?**

One of the biggest problems in the world right now is modern slavery and human trafficking. About 60 to 70 million people a year are trafficked. Now, I've always been interested in human rights and in working with the marginalized and the homeless since I was six years old.

This problem of human trafficking was brought to my attention by

Fr Michael Czerny, who is a Jesuit in Rome and works closely with Cardinal Peter Turkson. This work against human trafficking was really initiated by Pope Francis, who wanted someone from the business community to work with religious sisters on the ground in 90 countries, helping them to develop more communication, and who would raise money and support their good work in preventing trafficking, and in rescuing people and helping survivors.

**Since April 2016 you have been a non-executive director of the Home Office of the United Kingdom. What exactly does this task imply?**

A non-executive director is someone who provides judgment, perspective and guidance to the people who run the Home Office, which deals with things like customs, immigration, security, border control, Metropolitan Police, fire and anything to do with the stability and safety of the United Kingdom.

I was very respectful of the previous head of the Home Office, who was Theresa May. Of course, she is now the Prime Minister. In 2015 Theresa May was the architect of a piece of legislation called the Modern Slavery Act, which for the first time

made it mandatory for companies to check if they had slaves in their supply chains.

Theresa May really identified the fact that slavery is now at a higher level than in the past 400-500 years, and I was inspired by her leadership on this issue, so I subsequently joined as a non-executive director of the Home Office.

**In what ways can Christians begin to see the market place as a "valid opportunity" to effect positive social change?**

This is an excellent question. Markets are about the allocation of resources; supply and demand for capital; supply and demand for resources; supply and demand of goods and services, supply and demand for food.

Sometimes it's good to allocate resources from one area to another, particularly if it can provide positive benefits. For this reason it is not correct to identify people who work in finance and the market place as Pharisees, as people whose sole aim in life is to make money. People often say to me, "Why do you still work? Why do you still want to make money?" I say to them, "The more money I make, the more of it I can give away."

We are all asset allocators. Our assets are the three Ts mentioned in the Bible, because God gives you three things: Time, Talent, and Treasure. It's up to us to allocate all three; we have to decide how we are going to spend our Time, our Talent and our Treasure. Not everyone has Treasure, but everyone has Talent – they just have to realize it – and we all have Time.

**On 20 October 2017, at a meeting with leaders in business and civil society, Pope Francis said, "We must seek to civilize the market with a view to an ethic friendly to man and his environment." How can this be achieved?**

Mother Teresa always said, "You only change the world one person at a time." So if you're looking at corporations you should be thinking about ethical profit; if you're thinking about education you should be inspiring

people to be confident in themselves and to do good for society; if you're thinking about creating businesses you should create businesses where people feel empowered to learn and to work and to give something back to society.

It's also important for people to know that everyone, even the smallest individual, can play a role, and not just the big institutions. Everyone has talent and some time as well; not everyone has money, but sometimes this money is not the answer; it's sometimes more about using the talent that God gives you to create a more civilized society.

I was with Mother Teresa a long time ago in Kolkata. There was a very young sister there who was rather aggressive, and Mother Teresa was giving a lecture on peace in the world. This sister raised her hand and said, "Mother I feel helpless, I can't do anything for peace in the world! What are we doing here? We don't help peace in the world!" Mother Teresa

**John Studzinski, Vice Chairman and Senior Managing Director of Blackstone, speaks at the 2016 Concordia Summit in New York**



**The Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, better known as the Brompton Oratory, is the second largest Roman Catholic church in London**

looked at her, and you have to remember that Mother Teresa was very formidable, and she said to her, "Well, sister, you could start by stopping slamming the door!"

Mother Teresa was trying to make the point that we should all look at our lives and our behavior. If we want to change the world we should figure out how we can change our behavior through daily prayer or silence, through patience and being there for others.

**What financial advice would you give to a person or family struggling to make ends meet?**

First, I would tell them to focus on understanding what their financial situation is; what resources are available to them either through the government or the community.

Secondly, what talent they have in their family. They should check to see if there's talent in their family that has not been properly utilized, so that someone could get a job that pays more.



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Thirdly, sometimes people can work on a voluntary basis and get a certain amount of dignity from it. Then they can use this activity as a training ground to get part-time employment. Sometimes volunteering in a charity can eventually get you a paying job.

Even if you're poor you can still find something you can do for someone else. If you focus on someone other than yourself by volunteering or doing a very modest job, God will help you. Prayer, lots of prayer, helps and is very powerful.

Lastly, we must not forget to ask other people for help.

**Has St Anthony ever played any particular role in your life?**

When you go to the wonderful Brompton Oratory (the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary) on the Brompton Road in London, and you go through the front door, on the left-hand side there is the Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In that chapel, on the right, there is this beautiful statue of St Anthony.

In my mind St Anthony is always associated with helping one solve complex problems. Often that statue is my first port of call when I enter that Oratory. I see this very dignified saint who also, in some respects, embraces the whole of humanity because he really understands problems on a world scale. No problem is so impossible that the saints' intercession cannot deal with it, and the prominence of St Anthony in the oratory is very symbolic for me. ♦