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# A Sprig of Laurel for Chief Justice Calogero

Paul R. Baier

*Louisiana State University Law Center*, paul.baier@law.lsu.edu

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## A SPRIG OF LAUREL FOR CHIEF JUSTICE CALOGERO

*Paul R. Baier\**

I started teaching at LSU Law School the same year Pascal Calogero was elected to the Louisiana Supreme Court. This was a generation ago. I love his name, “Pascal F. Calogero, Jr.” My heart links him to my own parents—immigrants come to America, come to New York harbor, with high hopes for their posterity.

Liberty is safe in the hands of judges like Pascal F. Calogero, Jr.

Our paths crossed when Justice Calogero invited me to give a speech to the American Justinian Society of Jurists. This was on the telephone; I had never met him. His voice is pure New Orleans. After a generation, I am lucky as a lonely teacher of the law to know this inestimable figure of Louisiana’s judicial history. What a great friend. Only Pascal F. Calogero, Jr., would don a black robe to hold a red rose in a play called “Father Chief Justice,” honoring U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Edward Douglass White—another of Louisiana’s great judicial sons.

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\* George M. Armstrong, Jr., Professor of Law, Paul M. Hebert Law Center, Louisiana State University. Scholar in Residence, Louisiana Bar Foundation, 1990–1992; Distinguished Professor 2004, Louisiana Bar Foundation; Secretary, Supreme Court of Louisiana Historical Society.

Let me mention two things that strike my mind and heart about New Orleans' beloved jurist. One is his judicial backbone; it is lineal to that of John Dixon, Pascal Calogero's Shreveport predecessor as Chief Justice of Louisiana. The other day, the Supreme Court of the United States vindicated Chief Justice Calogero's dissent—he was all alone on his court—on a matter of life or death under the Eighth Amendment.<sup>1</sup> Our Chief's backbone is bolstered by his wisdom. These two traits add up to greatness in a judge, given brains and time. Truly, God has been kind to this son of a New Orleans policeman.

The other thing I want to mention is the highlight—for me at least—of Chief Justice Calogero's portrait. The thing that hits my heart is his father's New Orleans policeman's badge in the painting. It tells us the son, is one of us.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Kennedy v. Louisiana*, 128 S. Ct. 2641, 2649 (2008) (quoting Chief Justice Calogero's dissent).