

# Bishop forms St. Thomas More Society in Diocese of Allentown

By DAN KELLY  
READING EAGLE

There are some aspects of God's work on Earth that, by their nature, can only be done by nonclerics.

One of those aspects involves the law.

The Most Rev. John O. Barres, bishop of the Allentown Diocese, said it was with the Second Vatican Council's Apostolate of the Laity in mind that he decided to form a St. Thomas More Society in the diocese.

The society focuses on one powerful aspect of the laity

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— the law.

Its members must be lawyers, judges or laypeople with degrees in canon law.

Barres will host the inaugural meeting of the society on Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Kutztown.

During the meeting, Barres said, he will discuss the his-

tory of the society in America, the goals of the local society and its future work in the Diocese of Allentown.

"St. Thomas More, martyr and patron saint of statesmen, politicians and lawyers, was an enormously successful lawyer, diplomat, statesman and writer on the European stage of the 16th century," Barres said.

"The new St. Thomas More Society in the Diocese of Allentown is an expression of the Second Vatican Council's emphasis on the Apostolate of the Laity," he said. "A lawyer, like a health care profes-

sional, teacher, social worker or venture capitalist, is called to holiness and mission right in the midst of their professional life.

"This call is expressed in professional and ethical excellence, a vibrant faith-filled family life and a deep commitment to the Eucharist, the Scriptures and to daily prayer."

Paul T. Essig, a Wyomissing attorney, is president of the new Allentown diocesan society.

The diocese comprises Berks, Lehigh, Schuylkill, Northampton and Carbon

counties. John J. Miravich, a Wyomissing lawyer, is president of the Berks contingent, which includes William Thornton Jr. of Stephens and Lee, Reading, and Berks County Judges Mary Ann Campbell and Thomas J. Parisi.

Pope Paul VI wrote extensively about the important role laypeople play in the church and recognized there are some roles, like that of politician or elected judge, that the clergy cannot perform. For that reason, he pushed the church to include lay professionals in the over-

all mission of Catholicism. He wrote in part: "... the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which one lives is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others."

The mission of this local society is to promote faith and culture in the realm of law and public policy and bring together people of any faith engaged in the legal profession, Barres said.

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# Bishop meets with members of diocesan St. Thomas More Society

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About 75 lawyers and judges met with the Most Rev. John O. Barres, bishop of the Diocese of Allentown, in St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Richmond Township, for the inaugural meeting of the new diocese-wide St. Thomas More Society.

The society is a religious organization consisting of judges, lawyers and those with a degree in canon law.

Berks County has had a St. Thomas More Society for 20 years, but Barres said he wanted to expand the organization to encompass all five counties in the diocese, including Lehigh, Northampton, Schuylkill and Carbon counties along with Berks.

Paul T. Essig, a Wyomissing lawyer who helped form the Berks society, has been elected president of the diocesan society.

Barres said he has always loved lawyers and the law and admired St. Thomas More, patron saint of statesmen, politicians and lawyers.

St. Thomas More Societies are important, Barres said, because lawyers and judges are so important to the community and society in general.

As a result of their importance, having Catholic judges, lawyers, politicians and statesmen sharing ideas is key to the successful mission of individuals and the diocese in general, Barres said.

More's example to modern lawyers is to remain faithful to God, the church and its



The Most Rev. John O. Barres, bishop of the Diocese of Allentown, speaks during a meeting of the St. Thomas More Society at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Richmond Township.

teachings at all times despite personal consequences. More was executed after he objected to King Henry VIII's divorce and remarriage as a violation of church law.

Barres said he worked closely with the St. Thomas More Society in the Diocese of

Wilmington, where he was an assistant to the bishop.

"It is so important for us to realize the leadership has got to come from you," Barres said. "You know what the pressures and temptations are, and its going to be your insights, in terms of

what is the spiritual formation that a modern lawyer needs in a modern Catholic context.

"What makes sense and can speak to the modern Catholic lawyer?" Barres asked. "What is that call you have to go deeper, not only into the legal profession but also the theological and ethical tenants that are so key to your day-to-day practice.

"And finally, your influence in the world is so important."

The St. Thomas More Society is a call to holiness for anyone in the legal profession of any faith.

"I think this is a big moment for our diocese," Barres said.

Barres presented about 75 members of the new society with an 18-inch statue of St. Thomas More and blessed it with holy water at the meeting.

Essig said he purchased a similar statue for the Berks County chapter when it formed 20 years.

"It's been a wonderful experience, and I'm very proud to continue the association with the diocesan society," Essig said.

Berks Judges Thomas G. Parisi and Mary Ann Campbell are founding members of the diocesan society and are now on its board of governors, along with Essig and John Miravich, a Wyomissing lawyer and president of the Berks society.

Eugene Orlando, a Wyomissing lawyer, is chairman of the society's education and formation committee.

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