

Diocesan St. Thomas More Society celebrates first Red Mass

By TAMIA QUIGLEY
Staff writer

"Welcome to our legal community, to our annual Red Mass when we call on the Holy Spirit to lead us on the path of justice," the Most Rev. John O. Barres, S.T.D., J.C.L., D.D., Bishop of Allentown, said as principal celebrant and homilist of the first diocesan St. Thomas More Society (STMS) Red Mass Oct. 31 at the Cathedral of St. Catharine of Siena, Allentown.

Bishop Barres highlighted the day as the 10th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's "Motu Proprio" ("On His Own Accord"), proclaiming St. Thomas More patron of statesmen and politicians. Pope Pius XI proclaimed St. Thomas More patron of lawyers at his canonization in 1935.

"The ultimate purpose of this society is to help us to live in the truth of God," Bishop Barres said of STMS, urging those gathered to follow in the footsteps of St. Thomas More and dedicate themselves to God first.

The board of governors of the society invited those involved in the legal profession and their families to attend the afternoon liturgy and ensuing reception in the parish activity center.

The society is a Catholic professional association that promotes the mutual interaction of faith and culture in the realm of law and public policy.

Began in the 13th century, the tradition of the Red Mass — so named for the red vestments worn by the clerics and the red robes worn by the judges of the high court in England — is celebrated today in more than half the states of the United States.

This Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit invokes divine blessing on all those involved in the pursuit of justice, especially judges, lawyers and elected officials.

Principal concelebrants were the Rev. Msgr. Andrew R. Baker, chaplain of STMS and pastor of the cathedral; the Rev. Thomas F. Dailey, O.S.F.S., associate chaplain of STMS and director of the Salesian Center for Faith and Culture at DeSales University, Center Valley; the Rev. Msgr. Alfred A. Schler, J.C.L., V.G., diocesan vicar general, defender of the bond on the Diocesan Tribunal and resident of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, Hellertown; the Rev. Msgr. David L. James, V.E., vicar for synod implementation and promoter of justice, defender of the bond and advocate on the Diocesan Tribunal, and pastor of St. Francis of Assisi, Allentown.

Also: the Rev. Msgr. Thomas P. Koons, V.R., judge on the Diocesan Tribunal, vicar for religious and resident of St. Francis of Assisi; the Rev. Msgr. John B. McCann, pastor of Immaculate



The Most Rev. John O. Barres, S.T.D., J.C.L., D.D., Bishop of Allentown, center, celebrates the first annual diocesan St. Thomas More Society (STMS) Red Mass Oct. 31 at the Cathedral of St. Catharine of Siena, Allentown. Concelebrants include, from left: the Rev. Msgr. John B. McCann; the Rev. Msgr. Thomas P. Koons, V.R.; the Rev. Msgr. Andrew R. Baker; the Rev. Marc S. Gherardi, O.S.F.S., J.D.; the Rev. Msgr. Alfred A. Schler, J.C.L., V.G.; and the Rev. Msgr. David L. James, V.E. Kneeling are the Rev. Mr. Jason F. Stokes, left, and the Rev. Msgr. Victor F. Finelli. (Photos by John F. Smitz)

RED MASS 2010

On the tenth anniversary of the Motu Proprio proclaiming St. Thomas More patron of statesmen and politicians.

Conception BVM, Douglassville; and the Rev. Marc S. Gherardi, O.S.F.S., J.D., of DeSales University.

Master of ceremonies was the Rev. Msgr. Victor F. Finelli, judge on the Diocesan Tribunal, coordinator of Episcopal Masters of Ceremonies and administrator of Annunciation BVM, Catasauque.

The Rev. Mr. Jason F. Stokes, transitional deacon assigned to St. Joseph the Worker, Orefield, assisted. Andrew D. Hoffman, Esq., Red Mass committee chairman who spearheaded arranging the liturgy, greeted those gathered as the Mass began.

The Hon. John P. Lavelle and Eugene Orlando, Esq., were lecturers. Charles Bressi, Esq., and Patrick Barrett, Esq., read the intercessions. Gift bearers were Paul T. Essig, Esq., president of STMS; Elizabeth R. Graver, Esq., secretary of STMS; Timothy J. Duckworth, Esq., treasurer of STMS; and John Krjasa, Esq.

The Cathedral Choir, directed by Beverly McDevitt, provided music for the liturgy. The fourth degree Knights of Columbus provided an honor guard.

Susan L. Hoffman designed the program cover and Prayer to St. Thomas More on the back page of the program. The Bar Association of Lehigh County sponsored the altar flowers.

"When we live in the truth, we open ourselves to the power of living life boldly, confidently and humbly as a son or daughter of God," Bishop Barres imparted in his homily.

The bishop recalled that on Pope Benedict XVI's recent trip to England, Scotland and Wales for the beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman, the pope emphasized, "England has a long tradition of martyr saints whose courageous witness has sustained and inspired the Catholic community here for centuries...."

"In particular, I recall the figure of St. Thomas More, the great English scholar and statesman, who is admired by believers and nonbelievers alike for the integrity with which he followed his conscience, even at the cost of displeasing the sovereign whose 'good servant' he was, because he chose to serve God first."

Bishop Barres said Pope Benedict XVI, in his Sept. 18 vigil

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'A Modern Guide to the Trial of Sir Thomas More'

David R. Oakley, Esq., will present "A Modern Guide to the Trial of Sir Thomas More" Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2011 at 7:30 p.m. at DeSales University. The event is co-sponsored by the diocesan STMS.

Oakley earned his J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center in 1990. A former research fellow for the Center for Thomas More Studies at the University of Dallas, he is a member of the Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers of New Jersey.

The presentation will encapsulate Oakley's earlier publication about English heresy procedures and a forthcoming work on the major legal issues of More's trial. Participants will learn the nature of the proceedings against Thomas More, hear the evidence against him and defend his case.

For more information: 610-433-6461, info@stmsallentown.org or www.stmsallentown.org.



Members of the legal profession and their families listen to Bishop Barres impart the homily.



Gifts are presented at the offertory by Timothy J. Duckworth, Esq., treasurer of STMS; John Krjasa, Esq.; Elizabeth R. Graver, Esq., secretary of STMS; and Paul T. Essig, Esq., president of STMS.



Above, Judges at the Mass listen intently to the bishop's words.

Right, Bishop Barres enjoys talking with Northampton County Judge Jack Panella, his wife Joanne and Annmarie Panella at the ensuing reception.



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service homily at Hyde Park, described Cardinal Newman's view of truth:

"Newman teaches us that if we have accepted the truth of Christ and committed our lives to him, there can be no separation between what we believe and the way we live our lives. Our every thought, word and action must be directed to the glory of God and the spread of his kingdom."

Bishop Barres said Cardinal Newman's view of truth as described by the pontiff can be seen as a commentary both on the day's Gospel — John 14:15-17, which emphasizes that the union and love between the Father and Son is poured out in us in the spirit of truth that dwells within us — and on the life of St. Thomas More.

"St. Thomas More lived — and gave his life — for truth. And he had the courage and fortitude to do this precisely because of his profound understanding that he was a son of God," Bishop Barres said.

"He provides a powerful example that not only shows that objective truth exists, but that we have the God-given ability to discern it. He stands as an example for all statesmen, politicians and lawyers — and indeed all of us — showing that we have an obligation to find and to serve the truth, and to work to protect the lives and fundamental dignity of all human beings."

Bishop Barres referenced Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton, who in 1929 wrote, "Thomas More is more important at this moment than at any moment since his death, even perhaps the great moment of his dying. But he is not quite so important as he will be in about a hundred years' time."

"Chesterton's assertion of St. Thomas More's importance to modern times was soon vindicated," Bishop Barres said, noting he was canonized and named patron saint of lawyers six years later. This year, May 19 marked the 75th anniversary of St. Thomas More's canonization.

"The canonization of St. Thomas More, of course, did not occur in a vacuum," Bishop Barres said, recalling the 1930s were

a decade in which totalitarianism was on the march with Nazis, communists and fascists all arguing that people owed their highest loyalty to the state and must serve its goals. Pope Pius XI rejected the totalitarian concept of society, his stance highlighted by canonizing St. Thomas More.

"In the very dark decade of the 1930s,

St. Thomas More provided a powerful beacon of hope and inspiration. He was a light in the darkness precisely because he had devoted his life to, and sacrificed it for, Christ, the true light in the darkness."

In 1966, "A Man for All Seasons," the Academy Award-winning movie chronicling St. Thomas More's life, placed "St. Thomas More's heroic virtue in the public consciousness and conscience," Bishop Barres said.

Pope John Paul II issued "Motu Proprio," proclaiming St. Thomas More patron of statesmen and politicians, on Oct. 31, 2000.

Reflecting on this, Bishop Barres said, "Whenever men or women heed the call of truth, their conscience then guides their actions reliably toward good. Precisely because of the witness which he bore, even at the price of his life, to the primacy of

truth over power, St. Thomas More is venerated as an imperishable example of moral integrity."

"It is now 2010. We are now in the age of Chesterton's prophecy, and there can be little question that Chesterton has been proven correct," Bishop Barres said.

"As Pope John Paul II recognized, we

live in an age in which our world needs examples of moral integrity, an age in which our consciences should stand for objective truth and not bend and shift to fit the changing fashions of the day."

Bishop Barres said Pope Benedict XVI has been thinking and writing on these issues for decades, and much of the "profound moral discourse in his 2009 encyclical 'Caritas in Veritate' ('Charity in Truth') finds expression in the life of St. Thomas More," Bishop Barres said.

The bishop said for all his success as a lawyer, diplomat, statesman and writer of the "European stage of the 16th century," St. Thomas More always realized the primacy of his vocation as a holy husband and father, "all the while keeping his eyes on heaven and eternal life."

Bishop Barres conveyed in celebration

of the recent 75th anniversary of St. Thomas More's canonization and the 10th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, the bishops of Pennsylvania issued a joint statement in which they proposed St. Thomas More as a model for all citizens of the commonwealth because of his outstanding virtues and refusal to bend his conscience no matter what inducements were offered or threats were made. The bishop summarized much of the statement in his homily.

"St. Thomas More's moral integrity truly made him a man for all seasons, and most especially for Americans in the 21st century," Bishop Barres said.

"To that end, every bishop in Pennsylvania will support and encourage the strengthening of St. Thomas More Societies in those dioceses in which they already operate and their creation in those in which they do not. We are fortunate to have a St. Thomas More Society here which has outstanding leaders," Bishop Barres said.

He voiced his gratitude to STMS officers and board of governors, Msgr. Schierr, Msgr. Baker and Fr. Daitley for their leadership and efforts, as well as diocesan counsel Jay Leeson and Robert O'Hara, president of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference.

The bishop described St. Thomas More as "an inspiration not only to the Catholic lawyer but to any lawyer or public servant who actively promotes the common good."

"St. Thomas More Societies are led by judges and lawyers who strive to bring the light of St. Thomas More to the profession of law," Bishop Barres said.

"Their purpose — indeed their mission — is to help bring the exemplary life for which St. Thomas More was known into the working world, as well as to provide lawyers and judges with a vehicle to use their talents in pursuing the public good," said Bishop Barres.

"In that light, they are increasingly following their patron and are becoming a voice for the rights of conscience and human rights in an age that too often loses track of first principles."

For more information about STMS: 610-433-6461, info@stmsallentown.org or www.stmsallentown.org.

