

Bishop McFadden at Red Mass prays for attention to ‘person of truth’

"For all of you in the legal profession and in public service, I encourage you to allow your Christian faith to guide you in your daily activities as it did your patron saint St. Thomas More," said Bishop Joseph McFadden of Harrisburg during the Diocese of Allentown Red Mass Oct. 14 at the Cathedral of St. Catharine of Siena, Allentown.

Bishop McFadden was homilist at the Red Mass, a votive Mass of the Holy Spirit that requests guidance of the Holy Spirit on all who seek justice, especially judges, attorneys, law school professors, students of the law and government officials who are tasked with the responsibility of executing and upholding the law.

Bishop John Barres of Allentown presided at the annual Mass, which draws its name from the red vestments worn by clergy and the color red signifying a willingness to defend the truth inspired by God even at the cost of shedding one's blood.



In his homily Bishop McFadden said it is appropriate for the church to pray for all those involved in the legal and government field because their work is involved in the proper ordering of society.

"In our Creed, we proclaim the Holy Spirit to be the Lord and giver of life who proceeds from the father and the son and who has spoken through the prophets. We believe this same Holy Spirit had been given to each one of us as a fruit of the work of Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us so that we may have an eternal share in the very life of God," he said.

He also pointed out that many faithful fail to pay much attention to the "person of truth," and urged members of the legal and governmental communities to uphold human dignity for all people.

"I think that we tend to give the Holy Spirit lip service but don't really believe in him or call upon him as often as we should when we are in need of his assistance to counsel us and, most importantly, when we need the courage to do what is right and good in the face of hostility and resistance that often stand in opposition to the truth," said Bishop McFadden.

"The role of those who work in the legal profession and in government service is to foster a society where justice, truth and peace can be found, and fashion a community where every citizen's human dignity and value is supported and fostered," he said.

Bishop McFadden related St. Thomas More's clear understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit and the gifts given to him to the role of the legal profession and government officials.

"One of the distinguishing characteristics people admire in St. Thomas More was his attention to following his conscience. He clearly understood that deep within every man's heart there is a law inscribed by God calling him to do what is good and to avoid what is evil," he said.

"He clearly believed that one could know the ultimate truth because it has been revealed to us in and through Jesus Christ," said Bishop McFadden.

He compared St. Thomas More's dispute with King Henry VIII over adhering to God's law before a man-made law, to recent legislative measures like the Health and Human Services mandate that impinges on a person's right to follow their conscience.

"Unfortunately the clash of following one's own conscience and the inviolable right to do so, and the proper understanding of conscience and its proper formation have resonance in our day and age," said Bishop McFadden.

"It is unfortunate for people of faith to see a movement toward the redefinition of the role of religion in one's life being confined to worshiping in a church building and only ministering to people of the same faith and not being allowed to inform one's actions and behavior in the public square," he said.

Assuring the faithful that the Holy Spirit will never leave them, Bishop McFadden urged them to be open to the power of the Spirit.

"Allow the Holy Spirit to have an active role in your life. Believe in him and know that he is with you always as your helper and guide. You can be sure that if you call upon him, he will enlighten you and he will never lead you astray," said Bishop McFadden.

Bishop Barres closed the celebration by calling on the faithful to be instruments of justice and peace in the face of threats to religious liberty.

Noting the nation is at a critical point in history, he told the faithful to stand up for religious liberty to protect civil liberties.

"It's time for all Catholics – especially members of the legal community – to defend and promote religious liberty at every turn," he said.

"Anytime religious liberty is under attack – it is really an attack on every civil liberty that Americans respect and celebrate," said Bishop Barres.