

Deacon James Mann honored as 'Man for All Seasons' at Red Mass

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien helped usher in the start of a new judicial year Oct. 13 by celebrating a "Red Mass" at St. Thomas More in Baltimore.

Approximately 15 black-robed judges were present for the liturgy, along with numerous lawyers and other legal professionals who prayed for God's blessing and guidance in the administration of justice.

A tradition that stretches back many centuries, the Red Mass is named for the color of vestments worn by clergy for the Solemn Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit. In ancient times, justices also wore scarlet robes.

"We can't say enough to emphasize the critical role you play in keeping our society and our culture on the straight and narrow," Archbishop O'Brien said.

In his homily, Monsignor Peter J. Vaghi, pastor of the Church of the Little Flower in Bethesda, highlighted truths outlined in the Declaration of Independence - the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

"Our perennial challenge is to help this nation see again more clearly that inalienable rights and truths do exist," he said. "These truths are immutable and universal - not values created by the passing electoral plebiscite of any particular moment in time and history."

During a dinner following Mass, The St. Thomas More Society presented its "Man for All Seasons Award" to Deacon James L. Mann Jr. The award is named after St. Thomas More and is presented to individuals who embody the English saint's ideals.

A Baltimore native, Deacon Mann was appointed a judge to the District Court for Baltimore City in 2005 by Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr.

The St. Thomas More Society noted that litigants and lawyers who leave Deacon Mann's courtroom "know they have received a fair and impartial decision from a

judge striving his utmost to dispense justice, even when they may not agree with the result.”

Wilmington Bishop W. Francis Malooly, a longtime friend of Deacon Mann, called the judge a “model of integrity and virtue in public and private life.”

“It is because of men like Jim Mann that we pray for statesmen, politicians and lawyers,” Bishop Malooly said, “because we know they can live virtuous lives in their roles in government.”

Deacon Mann, who is stationed at St. Dominic in Baltimore, said he was honored by the award. He gave special thanks to his wife, Joyce, and asked each of his nine children to stand.

“Today, I hope you remember not the nice things that are said about me,” he told them. “I hope you remember this one thing that I want to say to you loud and clear: as happy and as honored as I am to receive this award, the thing that has made me happiest in my whole life, the thing that I’ve been the most proud of my whole life, is just that I was your father.”