

Former U.S. ambassador to Holy See addresses locals at Red Mass

For Mary Ann Glendon, the Learned Hand Professor of Law at Harvard University and former U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, receiving an award named for St. Thomas More was more than solely an honor.

"I accept the award," she said, "as a reminder of how little price we have to pay for speaking up now and then in favor of the faith."

Glendon received the Man for All Seasons Award from the St. Thomas More Society of Maryland Oct. 25 at St. Mary's Seminary in Roland Park after the organization's 60th annual Red Mass for lawyers, judges and all members of the legal profession.

Having served on the U.S. Bishops Religious Freedom Committee with Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, Glendon used the gathering to address rising concerns of religious liberty.

"Ever since Paul Revere, people from Massachusetts have liked to sound alarms," Glendon said. "I'm glad for the chance to sound the alarm for threats (religious freedom) to causes that I believe our patron, Thomas More, held very dear."

A native of Massachusetts, Glendon cited developments in her home state.

"Religious foster care agencies have closed their doors rather than comply with the state's demands to compromise their religious beliefs about marriage and the family," she said. "Thousands of children are needlessly being deprived of permanent homes simply because governments will not tolerate the kind of diversity that is represented by having religious and non religious service providers."

She emphasized that this is an issue not only facing Catholics, but every faith-based agencies, and that foster care agencies are only one example.

“It’s only one of the ways in which religious freedom in this country is gradually slipping away to the point where I don’t think it’s an exaggeration to say that religious freedom is in danger of becoming a second-class right, in the sense that it is regularly or at least too often subordinated to other rights claims and interests,” Glendon said. “It behooves us, I think, as Catholic lawyers to think about what we can do and to remember at an occasion like this, that whatever price we have to pay ... it’s nothing compared to what Thomas More did.”

In an interview with the Review after the event, Glendon said incorporating faith into one’s work in public service is about being true to oneself.

“For those of us in every religion, your faith is part of who you are,” she said.

Jack McCann, a commercial litigator with Miles and Stockbridge and president of the society’s officers and board of governors, said the board was excited to welcome Glendon as this year’s Man for All Seasons honoree. Past honorees include U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito and the late Justice Antonin Scalia; William J. McCarthy, executive director of Catholic Charities; and local judges and lawyers.

The Red Mass and award dinner is an important opportunity for members of the society to gather and discuss legal and Catholic current issues, especially in the current events climate, McCann said.

“Like anything else, we’re all very busy,” said McCann, a parishioner of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland. “It’s nice to be able to talk to other Catholics in the same position.”

“It’s a special opportunity for judges and lawyers to have a prayerful moment to interconnect faith and what we do on a day-to-day basis,” said Michael DiPietro, a judge for the Circuit Court for Baltimore City and parishioner of St. Thomas Aquinas in Hampden.

Archbishop Lori presided at the Red Mass. Concelebrants included Monsignor James P. Farmer and Father Gregory A. Rapisarda, chaplain and faith development coordinator of the St. Thomas More Society, respectively.

In his homily, Archbishop Lori discussed civility.

“There is no list of truths and virtues about which everyone agrees but let us face it, there can be no real civility in society so long as the fundamental human dignity of each person is not respected, including those who are the most voiceless and vulnerable,” the archbishop said.

Archbishop Lori encouraged the legal professionals to remain steadfast in trying political climates.

“The upshot of all this is not that you will suddenly find yourselves spouting the doctrines of the Virgin Birth or the Real Presence in your closing arguments, legal briefs, and opinions,” he said. “Rather, because you are touched – body, mind, and spirit – with divinity you will do your jobs better than ever – more fully human because of the Christ who lives in you, imparting to you through the Spirit the fullness of his love.

“In this way, when civility wears thin all around you, as inevitably it does, you will have in your hearts a hidden storehouse, a treasure trove of love, and precisely because that love within you transcends civility, you will become civility’s attractive practitioners.”

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