St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild principals assembled for the photo are, left to right, bottom row: Polito, president; William D. McGinn, secretary; Robert J. Hirsch, treasurer; Msgr. Gerard Krieg, spiritual director; (top row) Robert J. Edelman, Vincent M. Barone, Joseph Fischette, Joseph G. DeMaria, Judge Fritsch, Vincent P. Mitrano and Ronald J. Buttarazzi.

Red Mass Marks Court Opening

Bishop Mathew H. Clark will preside at Mass and Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey will preach on the theme, "Made in God's Image," at the 37th annual celebration of the Red Mass, 12:15 p.m., Friday, Sept. 10, at Old St. Mary's Church, downtown.

The tradition of the Red Mass dates back to the Fourth Century, and is an invocation for spiritual guidance and blessing for members of the legal profession, law enforcement agencies and the judiciary.

The tradition was established in the Diocese of Rochester in 1945 by Bishop James E. Kearney at the special encouragement of local attorney, Eugene R. Cusker, according to William Polito, president of the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild.

Since 1975, the guild, an association of about 100 local attorneys, has sponsored the Mass. Honorary Chairman of the event is Judge Joseph G. Fritsch, justice of the Supreme Court and administrative judge of the 7th Judicial District. Attorneys John F. Burke and Gerald Barret are co-chairmen of the Red Mass committee.

The guild, Polito said, also provides programs for the spiritual development of its members, including an annual retreat and encouragement of volunteer services for the handicapped, the elderly, the imprisoned and Haitian refugees.

The public is invited to the Mass.

Senate Stage Is Set For Key Abortion Votes

By Jim Lackey

Washington (NC) — Mired in a filibuster, the Senate made little progress in its long-awaited abortion debate Aug. 16-20. But it set the stage for at least one and perhaps two key votes on abortion shortly after it returns Sept. 8 from a Labor Day recess.

Before recessing, the Senate agreed to vote Sept. 9 — the day after it returns — on a motion to shut off the abortion filibuster. Sixty votes are needed for the motion to pass.

At the same time, Senate Majority Leader Howard H. Baker Jr. (R-Tenn.) told the Senate he still intends, on the Senate's first day back, to open debate on the Hatch constitutional amendment on abortion. Baker said he hopes the Senate will agree to an eight hour debate on the Hatch proposal with a vote also to take place Sept. 9.

The Senate filibuster was aimed at a proposal by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) linking together the abortion and school prayer issues.

Helms' proposal, the precise wording of which was not unveiled until the third day of the debate, would permanently restrict federal funding of abortion and would prohibit the federal courts from ruling on cases involving school prayer.

It differs substantially from earlier proposals by Helms for a "human life bill." Dropped from the new proposal was a section extending to the unborn the protection of "personhood" in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

But the new proposal, which argues that the U.S. Supreme Court "erred" in its 1973 abortion rulings, also would give states the right to appeal directly to the high court whenever a lower court invalidates state laws which restrict or prohibit abortion.

Helms, at one point during the debate, admitted that the personhood section of his bill was dropped because it appeared it could not pass.

Although several senators participated in the filibuster, the two primary speakers were Sens. Bob Packwood (R-Ore.) and Lowell P. Weicker Jr. (R-Conn.). Both charged Helms with attempting to strip power from the federal judiciary on the abortion and school prayer issues.

Weicker, occasionally shouting toward the tourist-filled Senate galleries, said school prayer proponents were attempting to wear their religion on their sleeve.

"There is no greater mischief that can be created than to combine the power of religion with the power of government," said Weicker, "and history has shown us that time and time and time again."

But Sen. Jeremiah Denton (R-Ala.) maintained that the Founding Fathers would be "spinning in their graves" if they knew prayer services were not permitted in public schools.

"I simply believe that it is better not to prohibit prayer in school than to prohibit it," Denton said.

The only vote during the debate came after Weicker and Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) introduced separate amendments in an apparent attempt to soften the potential impact of the Helms proposal.

Weicker's amendment said the Department of Justice and the federal courts still had the obligation to enforce the Constitution, while Baucus' expressed the sense of Congress that the federal courts should remain "open to litigants whose claims arise out of the Constitution."

A Helms motion to table the Weicker amendment failed, 38-59.

Even if the Senate agrees Sept. 9 to end the Packwood-Weicker filibuster, it still could be a long time before the Senate finally votes on Helms' school prayer and abortion proposals.

Helms, in unveiling his proposal, offered his abortion as an amendment to his school prayer measure, which in turn is being offered as an amendment to an unrelated bill raising the federal debt ceiling.

Technically, then, the Sept. 9 vote to shut off the filibuster will be only on Helms' abortion proposal, leaving a separate filibuster on the school prayer portion of his amendment a distinct possibility.

The debt ceiling to which Helms is attempting to attach his abortion and school prayer proposals must be approved by Congress on or before Sept. 30 to keep the federal government operating.

Also uncertain was whether consideration of the Hatch amendment, introduced last fall by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and favored by the U.S. bishops, also would be blocked by a filibuster.

Baker noted that the Senate had come within a "hair's breadth" of reaching an agreement that would have precluded the filibuster and would have brought the Hatch amendment to the Senate floor the same week as it began considering the Helms proposal.

"I still hope that we can get a unanimous consent agreement to limit debate to eight hours as provided in that original request on the Hatch amendment," he said.