

## Annual Red Mass draws legal community to celebrate fall court season



Six priests concelebrated the Mass with Bishop Clark, including Father Richard Brickler, pastor of St. Boniface Church.

By Teresa A. Parsons

The positive Catholic tradition of law is supporting human life, protecting those who are unable to protect themselves, according to Father Frank R. Haig, SJ, the homilist at the 40th Annual Red Mass on Friday, Sept. 20. Attorneys, judges, firefighters, police and sheriffs' department representatives, supporting staff and families gathered at St. Mary's Church in downtown Rochester for the Mass, which symbolically opens the court season. Bishop Matthew H. Clark was celebrant.

The president of LeMoyne College in Syracuse, Father Haig holds a doctorate in theoretical physics from Catholic University in Washington and attended the University

of Rochester as a National Science Foundation post-doctoral fellow. He is also the brother of former Secretary of State Alexander Haig.

In his homily, "The Law of the Electron and the Law of the Courts" Father Haig addressed differences between physical law and human law.

"Why is 'oughtness' not present in physical law and omnipresent in human law?" Father Haig asked. He illustrated his point — to the amusement of his listeners — by holding an imaginary discussion with an electron. Electrons, governed by immutable physical law, don't gain or lose mass or change their charge, he pointed out. They simply are, whereas humans, who are con-

stantly struggling with their weights and energies, are governed by laws which must constantly react to the common good of society.

"Human law is not only a restraining influence," Father Haig said. "It should also enable its citizens to be more fully human by promoting the common good."

"We have to struggle to be what we can be ... that's our challenge as humans every day, to be better than we are," he concluded.

The Red Mass originated in England during the fourth century reign of Edward I as a spiritual blessing on legal, judiciary and law enforcement agencies, and is still celebrated in many parts of England, according to organizers. Bishop James E. Kearney began the tradition in Rochester in 1945. In 1975 the St. Thomas More Lawyer's Guild began sponsoring the Mass.

The Mass opened with a group of standard bearers from the Monroe County Sheriff's Department, the Rochester Police and Fire departments and the State Police leading a procession of past and present judges, Bishop Clark, Father Haig and priests from the diocese who are either canon lawyers or in some other way associated with the law. The priests, who concelebrated Mass with Bishop Clark and Father Haig, included the guild's spiritual director and a canon lawyer, Monsignor Gerald Krieg of St. Stephen's in Geneva; Father Robert O'Neill and Father William Laird, both of the diocesan Tribunal, Father Kevin McKenna, vice chancellor of the diocese; Father Richard Brickler, pastor of St. Boniface; and Father Charles Bennett, pastor of St. Agnes in Avon and a founder of the guild.

St. Mary's Church Choir, along with several attorneys, provided music. Assistant district attorneys and public defenders served as ushers.

In addition to sponsoring the Red Mass, members of the St. Thomas More Guild serve as volunteer advocates for inmates at Albion, Orleans, Attica and Groveland prisons.



Bruce Wang

Father Frank R. Haig, S.J., and Monsignor Gerald Krieg, pastor at St. Stephen's Church in Geneva, precede Father Louis Vassle and Bishop Matthew H. Clark in the opening procession of the 40th annual Red Mass.

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