

**Remarks delivered on October 11, 2019, at the dinner and reception following the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana's 2019 Red Mass at St. Alphonsus Liguori Parish, by James Patrick Hanlon, United States District Judge.*

Thank you, I'm very honored to speak here this evening.

I would first like to first express my gratitude to those who started the tradition of the Red Mass in the Diocese of Lafayette. This is the fourth annual Red Mass in our Diocese and the bar has been set high by the prior speakers, Chief Justice Rush, Justice Massa and Chief Judge Magnus-Stinson.

I would also like to thank Father O'Keeffe for hosting this evening's event and the many staff and volunteers who have given their time to make it possible.

I would also like thank the Bishop for being here, supporting this event and celebrating the beautiful Mass that we just attended.

I am very happy to have my family—who were already introduced—here this evening with me. We have been parishioners here at St. Alphonsus Liguori since 2006.

We gather for the Red Mass to offer prayers for those in the legal profession, judiciary and public life, asking that they are blessed with wisdom and understanding. We also ask to invoke divine guidance and strength in carrying out our duties in the legal profession, and to honor the Holy Spirit as the source of wisdom, understanding, counsel and fortitude.

The Red Mass gets its name from the color of the vestments and robes that the celebrant, judges and academics wore to a special annual Mass held to mark the opening of the term of court. Our timing is perfect because today is the opening day of the new Supreme Court term. We already heard about the history of the Red Mass, and there is a nice written summary in the program, so I will not repeat it.

But understanding the history and purpose of the Red Mass doesn't necessarily answer why we all are here. We're all lawyers with a lot of obligations, unreturned calls, emails in our inbox and unfinished work sitting on our desks. But today we all chose to put that stuff aside and make time to come together to offer our prayers for our profession.

Why did we make that choice?

I think one reason is that we all have a strong desire to live our faith through our profession. While the Red Mass is great way to do this because it celebrates the intersection of law and faith, many of us yearn to more fully live our faith through our profession every day.

That's not always easy and in fact is somewhat of a controversial topic these days. As Catholics, we are called to the vocation of the moral life. This includes living our faith out "in the world" and not just in church and at home. At the same time, we are obligated as lawyers and judges to follow the law.

I believe that choosing to view our profession as a vocation to be performed with humility is what enables us to live our faith while maintaining fidelity to the law we are obligated to uphold.

To understand our profession as a vocation, it's important to understand the role of law and lawyers in our society. The law is unique and fundamentally important to society because it defines how humans interact with each other. As lawyers, we are the interpreters of the law and for many people, their experience interacting with a lawyer or lawyers will largely define and shape their view of the law.

As lawyers, we experience every aspect of the human condition through our work: family law, including adoptions, wills and trusts, caring for the elderly, execute estates after people die; all phases of business from forming a company, to acquisitions and disputes resolution; bankruptcy, whether personal or business; serious personal injuries; and serious problems involving criminal law.

For many lawyers, the profession cuts to our core because we experience some of life's highest highs and lowest lows with and through our clients and others who are impacted by our work. But while we may feel our client's pain or the difficulties of practicing law, we should always remember that law is inherently good and has noble purposes

Law enables people to live in freedom and reach their potential. Law seeks to put the poor on same level playing field as those who have more money and social status. And our profession is inherently good because it is built upon an understanding of a mutual commitment to further the common good through our work.

While we may readily realize the important role of law and its fundamental goodness, we may still have a hard time thinking that we are able to live our faith

through our profession. One problem is a commonly held view in society today that a person's faith life and professional life are supposed to be strictly separated. That a person is supposed to be one person at home and at church but check their views at the door and become a different person when they go to work.

This view holds that a lawyer or judge can't bring their faith into their work because doing so would cause him or her to violate their oath to uphold the law. Under this view, we are made to feel like we've have been presented with mutually exclusive options, "well, which one is it? Are you going to follow the law or your faith?"

But I think this view is based on mistaken beliefs about what it means to live one's faith through their profession as a lawyer or judge. Living our faith through our profession does not mean that we substitute our religious beliefs, teachings and preferences for what is required by the statutes, precedents and codes of conduct that we are bound to follow. Living our faith through our profession does not mean that we reach a different result or that we don't follow the law we are sworn and obligated to uphold.

To the contrary, fidelity to the law sometimes requires us to make arguments or hard decisions that are not in line with, or maybe even squarely opposed to, our beliefs as Catholics. Our faith doesn't affect whether we follow the law we are obligated to follow, but rather how we carry ourselves when following that law.

Our goal is to serve both God and the law without contradiction -- the question is how?

As I was pondering this question in preparation for this evening, I read story about young St. Alphonsus Liguori. Here's the story.

Alphonsus Liguori lived in the Naples region of Italy in the 1700's. He became a lawyer at age 16, when the minimum age to become a lawyer was 20. Supposedly, he never lost a case. He was brilliant and quickly emerged as a leader of the Naples bar. By all accounts he was very pious young man, who showed very few signs of levity.

But around age 26, his success began affecting him. He began neglecting prayer and practices of piety, and spending his time going to banquets, theatre and other entertainment.

Now, I'm sure everyone here has had at least one experience that took years off your life when in the course of doing legal work you realized there was something you overlooked, something you didn't do but should have done, or something you did that you shouldn't have done. Well young Alphonsus was no different.

He was representing a party in a large commercial lawsuit involving a lot of money. He gave a brilliant opening statement and sat down feeling good about how smart he was and confident of imminent victory. But before the first witness testified, opposing counsel walked up to him and said in a menacing voice, "Your arguments are wasted breath. You have overlooked a document that destroys your case." The confident young Alphonsus was unimpressed and essentially said, "oh yeah, let's see it."

Opposing counsel showed him a document that Alphonsus had seen and reviewed many times, but always read it a way that made it not damaging to his case. But on this day, when it was handed to him by opposing counsel in open court, he realized for the first time the correct reading of the document was the opposite of how he had read it. Feeling sickened, he slumped back in his chair turning white and said in a broken voice, "You are right. I have been mistaken. This document gives you the case." He was crushed and thought his career was ruined. He didn't eat for three days.

Later, he began to see his humiliation as having been sent by God to break down his pride. He returned to prayer and piety, and on two occasions heard a voice say to him, "Leave the world and give thyself to Me." The rest is a story for another day as Alphonsus went from being a lawyer to serving the Lord as a priest.

While we may not go on a hunger strike or quit practicing law, the story made me think perhaps we can best serve God and law when we practice law as a vocation and do so with humility.

He who exalts himself shall be humbled and he who humbles himself shall be exalted. We can practice humility in our work as lawyers and judges by taking this passage to heart, recognizing our work is not about us. It's about the rule of law and those affected by our work, the public and clients. We're not indispensable but merely temporarily entrusted with safeguarding the institutions we're part of. In 100 years, we'll all be gone. But God willing, the Constitution and the courts will be here serving same function of safeguarding liberty and upholding the rule of law.

We can practice humility by living the most important commandments through our work. We don't have guess what they are because Jesus told us: *Love the Lord with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul.*

We can live this Commandment out every day in our professional lives by having awareness, awareness that we are only able to do what we do because God has blessed us with the capability and stamina to do this profession, and it could be taken away in an instant any time. We can also do this by praying for wisdom and courage, acknowledging we need God in our work and trusting that he has and will continue to give us what we need to do it correctly.

Love one another as I have loved you. We can show humility by honoring and giving thanks to those who support us at work and at home, recognizing that we couldn't do our job without their help every day. We can show humility by doing our job with the golden rule in mind and the goal of serving our profession and clients, rather than causing harm to others.

We are told in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, *let all that you do be done with love.* We know that we can make the record we need, make the point to opposing counsel, and get the admissions we need out of a witness with civility and motivated by the desire to live our faith through our profession, rather than anger, vengeance or personal animosity.

Luke's Gospel tells us, *to whom much is given, much is expected.* This calls us to practice humility by giving our work our best effort every day, rather than thinking that because we are smart, experienced or successful that we don't have to go the extra mile. Justice Scalia once said that when Jesus said, "be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect", he meant perfect in all things, including one's lifework.

A good Catholic therefore can't be an intentionally sloppy worker. Rather, we need to approach our work anew each day striving for perfection. We need to recognize that what may be routine, even mundane, work to us, may be the most important thing in the life of the individual client or person appearing before the Court and how we do our work should reflect that.

Finally, we can practice humility by mentoring. What better way to put our faith in action and share God's grace than to follow the model of St. Paul by mentoring and leading others?

I would bet that everyone here experienced the generosity of other lawyers on the journey to where they are today. We can mentor not only by saying yes

when asked to step up, but also by looking for mentoring opportunities. Jesus sought out people who needed help. We can follow his example by seeking out other lawyers who could use some advice and help and stepping up to provide them with what they need.

We practice humility by asking ourselves, “how did I get where I am?”. Is it really because I’m so smart, great, hard-working and deserving? Or is the result of God’s grace lived out in our lives through the generosity of others? We can practice humility by asking how we may be part of God’s grace and help get someone else where they want to be.

The legal profession is unique. It can be rewarding, challenging and satisfying, but can also exact a toll on our lives because we put our hearts and souls into our work. It can be tiring, frustrating and at times seem thankless. And at times, we may feel ourselves acting like young Saint Alphonus—getting caught up in the practice of law while losing sight of why we got into the profession in the first place.

But choosing to view our profession as a vocation to be performed with humility enables us to live our faith by serving others, bringing mercy and justice into the world, and putting the successes and challenges in perspective.

I’d like to leave you with these thoughts about living our faith through our profession, which are not original but from the wisdom of St. Theresa of Calcutta. She didn’t write them in the context of the work of lawyers, but I think it is pretty good advice on how we as lawyers can live our faith through our profession by viewing our work as our vocation and doing our work with humility:

The good you do today will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

Thank you for being here this evening.