



**SAINT THOMAS
MORE SOCIETY
OF CENTRAL
PENNSYLVANIA**

**Diocese of Harrisburg
4800 Union Deposit Road
Harrisburg, PA 17111-3710**

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Dear Members of the St. Thomas More Society of Central Pennsylvania:

Our patron, St. Thomas More, was caught in a crisis emanating from a conflict between authority exercised by the King and fidelity to Jesus's Church. Today we are caught in a crisis of a much different nature. Today, the crisis is emanating from within the Church because teachings of the Church were not followed in the past. The Catechism teaches us that one cooperates in sin when one does not disclose or hinder it when there is an obligation to do so and by protecting evildoers. (CCC § 1868). In today's crisis, the Divine Law, Natural Law and Secular Law are united in their demand that children are to be protected from those who will harm them.

The Board of Governors of the St. Thomas More Society of Central Pennsylvania expresses its grief and sorrow that innocent members of the body of Christ suffered great pain and distress from acts committed against their bodies and spirits by persons placed in positions of trust by the Church. These innocents often suffered in solitude. The Board asks each of you to pray fervently for those victimized. When one member of the body of Christ is injured so are we all.

Prayer is but one obligation our faith requires. Fasting, penance, and almsgiving are further obligations of each of us. The Catholic Bar Association, with which our Society is affiliated, has issued a position statement on the current crisis within the Church. Within its statement, the CBA is calling upon all members to set aside this Friday, September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, as a day of prayer and penance for the intentions of the victims of this crisis, and for healing for the Church. The CBA asks each of us to make a special effort to attend Mass and to fast. The Board of your Society joins in that request, and we encourage our members to read the CBA's position statement, which can be found on the CBA website at catholicbar.org/Legal-Resources.

Our Mission

We come together in fellowship for mutual support to deepen our faith that we may promote Catholic principles, witness to Christ through word and action in our legal callings, and share our talents for the glory of God in the spirit of Saint Thomas More.

There are new and ongoing investigations throughout the country and there have been investigations in other countries as well. Now is the time for full disclosure so that no victim is left behind and so that as we can move forward as Jesus's Church. The Church must be transparent and cooperative in all investigations of abuse by those within its hierarchy, regardless of the age or gender of the victim.

As Catholic lawyers and members of the laity, we can ask ourselves what we can do to hinder such evil on a practical basis. Since the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People was approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Diocese of Harrisburg has taken substantial steps in implementing child protection programs. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with the Diocese's policies. We further suggest you familiarize yourself with the child protection laws, with which the Diocese and all parishes must comply.

We will provide this information to you on our website in the near future. Armed with this information, you will be better prepared to ensure that those working with children, both clergy and laity alike, adhere consistently and equally to both Diocese policy and the law. More importantly, you will be better able to report instances of abuse you recognize to law enforcement authorities. Unlike the situation faced by St. Thomas More, in regard to the protection of children, there is no light between our fidelity to the Church and our oath as lawyers to uphold the law.

May God bless and keep you and yours. St. Thomas More, pray for us.

On behalf of the Board of Governors,

Linda Carroll

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President

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