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An information Exchange Forum

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CATHOLIC LAWYERS' GUILDS

The year 1959 has been a memorable one for the Catholic Lawyers' Guild of Chicago. It saw the twenty-fifth year of the existence of the Guild and its silver anniversary. It also marked the year in which Edward R. Tiedebohl, one of the founders of the Guild, retired from the active practice of the law after many years of distinguished legal service in Chicago.

The twenty-fifth annual Red Mass was celebrated in Chicago by the Chancellor of the diocese, Rt. Rev. Monsignor Edward M. Burke, on November 15th. The sermon was delivered by the now Cardinal Albert Gregory Meyer of the Archdiocese of Chicago. Coincidentally, the Cardinal celebrated almost simultaneously his first anniversary in Chicago, the feast of his patron saint, St. Albert the Great, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Lawyers' Guild, and his elevation to the Sacred College of Cardinals. As expected, the day was a tremendous success.

Perhaps the success of this day, and indeed, the success of the Chicago Catholic Lawyers' Guild itself, is due in large measure to one man, Edward R. Tiedebohl.

Mr. Tiedebohl was born in Chicago in the year 1889. He pursued his academic studies in parochial schools, attended the University of Chicago, and received his law degree from Northwestern University School of Law. He practiced law continuously in Chicago and was considered by his confreres to be a talented and capable lawyer. He handled the legal affairs of many large corporations and estates, and also maintained an extensive general practice.

Of special note is his work in the formation of groups of lawyers into Catholic Lawyers' Guilds or St. Thomas More Societies in many cities. In the early years of this movement, New York and Chicago had the only active guilds. Today there are more than eighty guilds throughout the country, and it was in the development of them that Mr. Tiedebohl was most generous with his time and effort. As a result, guilds now exist from Maine to California and from the Canadian border to Florida.

The time devoted by Mr. Tiedebohl in this effort was given at great

personal sacrifice. He contacted numerous ecclesiastics and lawyers in all parts of the country by telephone and mail to promote this movement. The response to his endeavors has been truly amazing.

The Catholic Lawyers' Guild of Chicago has been a most valuable asset to the Archdiocese of Chicago. It has furnished legal services to the many agencies which facilitate the work of the Church in Chicago — the Chancery Office, the Catholic Charities, the Council of Catholic Women and many individual charities. This work is done without remuneration; in fact, as an offering of loyal sons to Holy Mother Church. Moreover, the Guild has furnished attorneys to indigent persons at nominal or no charge as evidence of the willingness of its members to give generously of their services to the poor.

An organization of this character has a splendid influence upon legislation and courts in matters which involve moral and religious questions, such as marriage, divorce, guardianship, adoption, education, parental rights and responsibilities. This does not imply interference in any improper sense, but a presentation of views and opinions which reflect the collective judgment of competent lawyers.

The work of the Catholic Lawyers' Guild is not identical with the Bar Association. The purpose of the former is to advance the legal profession, but particularly on a common basis of religion and its obligations. Many men who become members are strengthened in their faith and in Catholic Action by the example of the many fine lawyers in the group who not only advance the bench and bar with their abilities and integrity, but are exponents of the Catholic faith in the high quality of their performance of obligations to the profession, to society, and to their families. This example is excellently manifested by their attendance at the Red Mass.

Many members of the Catholic Lawyers' Guild of Chicago who have had the good fortune to work with Mr. Tiedebohl are most cognizant of the great contribution he has made, not only to Chicago but to the legal profession as well. To quote from an article by Mr. Tiedebohl, which he wrote some time ago:

All members of the bench and bar must be reminded that there are no legal barriers in the celebration of the Red Mass. This Mass is celebrated for all lawyers, irrespective of their creed. This is the occasion when we kneel down and thank God, each in his own way, for all the blessings we have received and ask Him how best we can continue to serve the cause of justice, whether we are of the bench or the bar.

The life of Mr. Tiedebohl and his devotion to his Church and profession exemplify what can be accomplished by men of sincerity and devotion who see to it that their high ideals bear fruitful fulfillment.