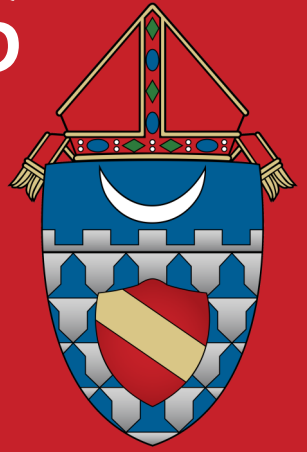


Red Mass 2026

Monday, October 5, 2026/5:30 PM
St. Maria Goretti, Westfield IN

Mass with Bishop Timothy L. Doherty
followed by a dinner for legal professionals
and a presentation by Marion County
Superior Court Judge David Certo



RSVP online:

www.dol-in.org/RedMass



The tradition of the Red Mass was begun by Pope Innocent IV in 1243 for the Ecclesial Judicial Court asking the invocation of the Holy Spirit as a source of wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude and strength for the coming term of the court. The color red signifies the Holy Spirit and martyrdom. St. Thomas More is the patron saint of lawyers.

Legal Community Invited to a “Red Mass”

The Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana will celebrate the tenth annual Red Mass on Monday, October 5, 2026, at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church (Westfield, Indiana) at 5:30 pm. All government officials (federal, state, local levels, executive, legislative, judicial branches), attorneys, paralegals, law students and their spouses are cordially invited to attend. One does not have to be Catholic to join us in prayer and fellowship for the legal community.

The Red Mass is a tradition in the Catholic Church which dates back to the 13th century. The first Red Mass is believed to have been celebrated in the Cathedral of Paris in 1245, and thereafter the tradition spread throughout Europe. A Red Mass was initially celebrated to mark the beginning of the annual term of the courts but can be held at other times.

The word “red” was originally used to describe the Mass in 1310, because the justices of the English Supreme Court wore scarlet robes. Over time the “Red” Mass came to have a deeper theological meaning, with red symbolizing the “tongues of fire” that descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost bestowing the gifts of the Spirit.

In the United States the first Red Mass was celebrated in New York City on October 6, 1928, at Old St. Andrew’s Church with Cardinal Patrick Hayes. Today over 25 dioceses throughout the United States celebrate a Red Mass each year, not only with fellow Catholics in the legal community, but with persons of all faith traditions in attendance.

One of the better known Red Masses is celebrated each fall at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington, D.C., before the Supreme Court begins its new term. This Mass is attended by the Justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, members of Congress, the President’s cabinet, and other federal and local government officials. Those who attend do so as private citizens and not in an official capacity to ensure proper boundaries between Church and state.

Despite this rich history, one might still ask why celebrate a Red Mass? In a culture facing many challenges and divisions, such a gathering is needed to exhort those governing society. It has always been the teaching of the Church to respect proper governmental authority and to seek divine guidance and protection for those who represent others. Moreover, those who serve in the legal community have a pivotal role promoting unity, liberty, justice, equal protection under the law and the common good. It is incumbent, therefore, that the Church support and pray for humility, knowledge, understanding, wisdom and courage, for those who are the stewards of our common good.

About Our Speaker

Judge David Certo serves as the judge of the Marion County Probate Court, where he hears emergency mental health commitments, guardianships, wills and trusts, and adult adoptions. He was appointed to the bench by Governor Daniels in August 2007 and has served in courts focused on domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, major environmental lawsuits, and criminal cases. Judge Certo led a team that founded the Indianapolis Veterans Court in 2015 and presided over the program until 2024. He was elected Presiding Judge for the 36 judges of the Marion Superior Court in 2013 and 2014. Judge Certo is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and the Indiana University McKinney School of Law. He was named an Outstanding Eagle Scout by the National Eagle Scout Association and serves as President of the Saint Thomas More Society of Indianapolis. He and his wife have four teenagers and are parishioners at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Church.

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