

From the Christian Service Commission

*Important organizations benefit from the gifts of Ss. Peter and Paul parishioners. As we continue to focus on recipients of funds from the **Christian Service Commission** allocations, two legal groups are discussed today. They work to protect our Catholic values, and fight many court battles to preserve our religious rights from both private and governmental interference and regulation. Much, if not most, of this legal work is done on a “pro bono” basis. We all have an interest in these judicial efforts as more and intense opposition from our societal structures seeks to curtail the constitutional rights of freedom of religion and conscience. The following two groups work for us on a daily basis. We are happy to support their efforts, and thank you for your Sunday financial generosity toward these two organizations.*

The St. Thomas More Society (STMS):

Founded in 1997 by 1965 Notre Dame graduate, Mr. Thomas Brejcha, the St. Thomas More Society grew out of Mr. Brejcha’s successful legal defense of noted pro life activist, Joe Scheidler and his Pro-Life Action League in the landmark RICO case of NOW vs. Scheidler. Volunteering his legal efforts outside of his private legal practice, Mr. Brejcha successfully defended Mr. Scheidler over the course of several years within the judicial system, concluding with an overwhelming 8-1 victory in the US Supreme Court. Since then, the STMS has expanded to a large network of pro-life attorneys in all 50 states who as of June 2013, had contributed to almost 90,000 hours of “pro bono” legal service valued at nearly 32 million dollars. They continue to defend most major pro-life leaders and organizations, along with groups, businesses, dioceses and other institutions being affected by governmental pressures such as the HHS federal mandate on insurance coverage for abortion procedures and abortifacient drugs.

Tributes to the work of the STMS have been many. Many of those are from noted pro-life leaders/clients of STMS, as well as Church hierarchy such as Cardinal Dolan and Cardinal George, and Bishop Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois and Bishop Conlon of our own diocese, who have testified to the importance and success of the STMS. Mr. Brejcha and his small STMS staff, headquartered in downtown Chicago, in conjunction with the large national STMS network of associated attorneys, have for years dedicated their work exclusively to defending life and the protection of religious freedom. They continue to rely on donations to support their work, and our SSPP parishioners have become loyal contributors to their work through a CSC allocation.

The Becket Fund: (TBF)

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty is an ecumenical, non-profit, public interest legal and educational institute with the mission of protecting the free expression of all faiths. They continually bring to the forefront, the principle that “because religious impulse is natural to

human beings, religious expression is natural to human culture.” They advance that principle in three areas – the courts of law, the court of public opinion, and in the world of academics.

As they are fond of saying, the Becket Fund attorneys have defended the religious rights of people from “A to Z”, from Anglicans to Zoroastrians. TBF attorneys and supporters share the common vision of a world where religious freedom is respected as a fundamental right for all people to enjoy and exercise.

In today’s climate of assault on public religious practice, coupled with intense pressure to limit or regulate freedom of religious verbal expression and conscience, support for this group of dedicated lawyers and staff is very important. As Archbishop Chaput of Philadelphia has said, “The Becket Fund’s work is more than good. It is vital.” TBF is a major proponent of freedom from the current governmental mandates and directives to limit religious values and rights. It is currently involved in many court cases, defending several different types of clients who are affected by unconstitutional regulation. Such a noteworthy case is the “Hobby Lobby” litigation to preserve the right of conscience in that private business concern.

Dependent on donations for their “pro bono” efforts, The Becket Fund is another important group supported by an allotment from the SSPP parishioners and SSPP Christian Service Commission budget.