



Catholic Foundation

DIOCESE OF LUBBOCK

2011 Red Mass Committee

October 4, 2011

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EMBARGOED UNTIL 8 P.M. TUES, OCT 4

To: All Media

From: Renée Underwood, runderwood@catholiclubbock.org 806-928-0463

Re: **The Honorable Gary Bellair Presented Sowder Award at Judicial Red Mass**

For only the third time in the history of the event, Red Mass organizers bestowed the Madison Sowder St. Thomas More Justice in Action Award to a local judge – The Honorable Gary M. Bellair. The announcement was made at the Eleventh Annual Judicial Red Mass, held this evening at Christ the King Cathedral and attended by members of the legal community from throughout the 25 counties in the Diocese of Lubbock.

In making the presentation, Most Rev. Plácido Rodríguez, CMF, bishop of Lubbock, said that Bellair was being recognized for his “contributions to improving the quality of life and upholding moral standards by personal involvement in and dedication to the advancement and fulfillment of justice and peace in our society and human endeavors.”

Bellair, a partner in the firm of Craig, Terrill, Hale & Grantham, LLP, is board certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in the field of civil appellate law. He is a Fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation, a member of the State Bar College, the Lubbock County and American Bar Associations, the State Bar of Texas and is the Municipal Judge for Ransom Canyon.

Married to Lorrie Lushnat-Bellair, he is active in the community, including service as an officer or a director for The Catholic Foundation, Ransom Canyon Memorial Chapel, Lubbock Big Brothers Big Sisters, Lubbock Transit Advisory Board and Lubbock Community Theatre. Bellair has served as an adjunct faculty member of Texas Tech School of Law and is regularly tapped as a speaker on standards of appellate conduct.

Bellair was honored as the John Crews Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year by Lubbock County Bar Association in 1996 and as Arbitrator of the Year by the Better Business Bureau of the South Plains in 1987.

The Madison Sowder St. Thomas More Justice in Action Award was established and presented posthumously in memory of Judge Madison Sowder in 2007. Sowder served as the long-time attorney for the Diocese of Lubbock. His law career, spanning more than a half-century, included service as a State District Court judge. He was a former Lubbock County Chairman of the Democrat party and

generously donated his time and talents to many worthy organizations in the community.

Never intended to be an annual award, it is bestowed at the Judicial Red Mass only when organizers believe there is a member of the legal community who merits the honor. Following its establishment, it was awarded a second time in 2008 to Elroy D. Simnacher, retired local attorney and dedicated community volunteer.

Several hundred judges, lawyers, public officials, law faculty members, their administrative staffs and people with a concern for justice from all faith traditions were in attendance at the event. The Red Mass, a judicial tradition that dates back to 13th century England, during the reign of King Edward I, was celebrated at Westminster Abbey and served as the official opening of the Judicial Year. It received its name from the fact that the celebrants wore red vestments, and the Lord High Justices were robed in brilliant scarlet.

The Red Mass was first celebrated in the United States in 1928 and has been held annually in Lubbock since 2000. The Mass promotes the unity of the judiciary and the legal profession.