



Catholic Foundation

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August 22, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: All Media

From: Rachel Martinez, Managing Director, rmartinez@catholiclubbock.org 806-792-3943, Ext. 207, 214-562-5344

Re: **Sowder Award to be Awarded Posthumously to Richard Koenig and Brian Murray for Lives Lived in the Advancement of Justice and Peace**

The Red Mass Committee of The Catholic Foundation of the Diocese of Lubbock, Inc. will posthumously award attorneys Richard Koenig and Brian Murray The Madison Sowder Saint Thomas More Justice in Action Award at the October 3 Red Mass and Dinner on Texas Tech Campus. The Koenig and Murray families will be in attendance at the Red Mass Dinner to accept the awards.

Richard Koenig attended the University of Texas undergrad where he met his spouse the Honorable Nancy Koenig. Following their time in Austin, Richard attended Texas Tech University School of Law, graduated in 1992 in the top ten percent of his class and was selected for membership in the Order of the Coif. He served ten years as an assistant district attorney for Lubbock County and then as a staff attorney with Legal Aid of Northwest Texas where he remained until his retirement in July 2016. It was his belief in social justice and civil rights that qualify him for the Sowder Award after a life time dedicated to public service.

Brian Murray attended Texas Tech undergrad and went on to attend the Texas Tech University School of Law, graduating in 1982. Brian dedicated himself to criminal defense work, though he maintained a general practice. He served twice as President of the Lubbock Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, and believed strongly in representing the indigent. He also had a soft spot for the deaf community, oftentimes providing pro bono representation for them, as he was keenly aware of their struggles because of his own experience with his youngest son, Roarke. Murray provided legal counsel to various Catholic entities throughout the South Plains.

Both, Koenig and Murray were lifelong Catholics and were often in attendance at the Annual Judicial Red Mass. This year their absence will be notable. Their families are award of the stature of the Sowder Award and are humbled by the recognition. "It is a shame we lost two great men in the last year," says an

anonymous nomination committee member, “The Sowder Award Nominating Committee couldn’t choose one over the other and we appreciate the Red Mass Committee allowing us to honor both men this year.”

The October 3 Red Mass and Dinner is expected to pack the McKenzie-Merkit Alumni Center to honor the legacy of these men and to hear keynote speaker, Texas Supreme Court Justice Eva Guzman.

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Details on attending the October 3 Red Mass or Dinner

This year the Red Mass still remains open to people of all faith traditions who have a concern for peace and justice. The Red Mass will begin at 6:30 p.m. at Kent Hance Chapel followed by a cocktails in McKenzie-Merkit Alumni Center at 7 p.m. and seated dinner at 7:30 p.m. where the Sowder Award presentation will take place along with remarks from Justice Guzman. Admission to dinner is \$20 and includes cocktails, hors d’Oeuvres and dinner. Student ticket price is \$10. RSVPs must be received by September 22. Now in its 17th year, the event is sponsored by The Catholic Foundation of the Diocese of Lubbock, Inc. and generous members of the legal community.

The Most Reverend Robert M. Coerver, Bishop of Lubbock, will serve as the principal celebrant for the Red Mass. Those in the entrance processional include federal, state, county and municipal judges from the 25 counties in the Diocese of Lubbock. Dress is business attire with red accents for both men and women. More information is available at www.catholicfoundationlubbock.org/redmass or by calling (806) 792-3943, extension 207.

Background on the Madison Sowder Saint Thomas More Justice in Action Award

The Madison Sowder Saint Thomas More Justice in Action Award was established in 2007 and presented posthumously in memory of Judge Madison Sowder to honor a member of the legal profession that best exemplifies the ethics of Thomas More, patron saint of attorneys, civil servants, court clerks, lawyers, politicians and public servants.

Sowder served as the long-time attorney for the Diocese of Lubbock. His law career spanned more than a half-century and 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, the Madison Sowder Saint Thomas More Award is bestowed at the Judicial Red Mass only when organizers believe there is a member of the legal community who merits the honor. In addition to Sowder, it was presented to Elroy D. Simnacher in 2008, to the Honorable Gary M. Bellair in 2011, to the Honorable Mark Hocker in 2013, to the Honorable J.Q. Warnick in 2015 and to Most Reverend Placido Rodriguez, CMF, Bishop of Lubbock in 2016.

About Justice Eva Guzman

Eva Guzman joined the Supreme Court of Texas in 2009, making history as the first Latina to sit on the state’s highest civil court. The next year, the people of Texas elected her to a full term. And Eva Guzman became the first Hispanic woman elected to statewide office in Texas. A proud Texan, Eva Guzman strives for excellence in her work on our state’s highest civil court. Justice Guzman believes “a judge’s highest duty is to uphold the Constitution.”

Before taking her seat on the high court, Justice Guzman served at two other levels of the state judiciary, authoring hundreds of published opinions as a justice on the Houston-based Fourteenth Court of Appeals and disposing of thousands of cases as judge of the 309th District Court in Harris County. Now in her sixteenth year on the bench, Justice Guzman consistently receives high marks in judicial evaluation polls as well as accolades from professional, civic, and law enforcement groups. Her honors and awards are many.

As the Supreme Court of Texas Liaison to the Texas Access to Justice Commission, Justice Guzman works hard to expand access to justice in civil legal matters for low-income Texans. She also chairs the high court's Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth, and Families, working with leaders across the state to improve outcomes for Texas's most vulnerable children and families. In addition to bringing big vision to this important work, Justice Guzman lends leadership and fresh ideas to other institutions within the legal community:

- Board of Trustees for The Center for American and International Law
- Duke University School of Law Board of Visitors
- Board of Trustees of South Texas College of Law
- Executive Committee, Appellate Judges Conference-American Bar Association Judicial Division
- Advisor to the American Law Institute

Before taking the bench in 1999, Justice Guzman enjoyed a successful ten-year legal career in Houston. She holds a B.B.A. from The University of Houston, a law degree from South Texas College of Law, and an LL.M from Duke University School of Law.

Married for over 25 years, Justice Guzman and her husband are parents to one daughter, who recently graduated from Harvard University.

The Red Mass Tradition

The first recorded Red Mass was celebrated in the Cathedral of Paris in 1245. From there, it spread to most European countries. The tradition began in England around 1310, during the reign of Edward II. The Mass 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.

In the United States, the first Red Mass was held in 1877 and today is observed in many cities throughout our country world including in Washington DC, where the Supreme Court heralds the opening of its year on the Sunday before the first Monday in October. Wherever it is celebrated, the Red Mass promotes the unity of the judiciary and the legal profession.

The first Diocese of Lubbock Red Mass was held in 2001 and has continued to grow in participation and stature with each passing year.

Diocese of Lubbock Red Mass Speakers

Note: Titles are as of the date each speaker addressed the Red Mass.

2001 Emilio M. Garza, Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit

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- 2002 Wallace B. Jefferson, Justice, Texas Supreme Court
- 2003 Anne M Burke, Justice, Illinois Appellate Court (now an Illinois Supreme Court Justice)
- 2004 Alma L. Lopez, Chief Justice, Fourth Court of Appeals
- 2005 Walter Huffman, Dean, Texas Tech University School of Law
- 2006 Jay C. Zainey, Judge, U. S. District Court, Eastern District of Louisiana
- 2007 Jane J. Boyle, Judge, U. S. District Court, Northern District of Texas
- 2008 George P. Kazen, Judge, U. S. District Court, Southern District of Texas
- 2009 Catherine M. Stone, Chief Justice, Fourth Court of Appeals
- 2010 Ann Crawford McClure, Chief Justice, Eighth Court of Appeals
- 2011 Ronald J. Rychlak, Professor of Law, University of Mississippi School of Law
Guest Homilist Most Reverend Cirilo Flores, DD, JD, Auxiliary Bishop of Orange
- 2012 Sidney Allen Fitzwater Chief Judge, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Texas
- 2013 Phil Johnson, Justice, Supreme Court of Texas
- 2014 Most Reverend John Paprocki, Bishop of Springfield
- 2015 Justice Gina M. Benavides, Thirteenth Court of Appeals
- 2016 Kevin Patrick Yeary, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals Judge

About The Catholic Foundation of the Diocese of Lubbock, Inc.

Since its beginnings in Lubbock, The Judicial Red Mass has been sponsored by The Catholic Foundation of the Diocese of Lubbock. The foundation exists to help Catholics live out the sacred mission of the Church by financially supporting the spiritual, educational and social needs of our Catholic community.

The non-profit organization was first created in 1987 by the Most Rev. Michael J. Sheehan, D. D., the first Bishop of Lubbock. The foundation is governed by a Board of Directors, comprised of both lay and clergy leaders, with a managing director and [the whole-hearted endorsement of Most Rev. Robert M. Coerver, Bishop of Lubbock.](#)

In 1998, the Catholic Foundation was incorporated, and has grown to more than \$3 million in managed assets through annual memberships, end-of-the-year giving, endowment funds, annuities, life insurance policies, bequests and investments. It provides more than \$115,000 annually in grants to the ministries of the Diocese of Lubbock, as well as its mission parishes, schools and Catholic organizations. For more information, contact 806-792-3943, ext. 207, or visit www.catholicfoundationlubbock.org.