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The Spirituality Committee of the  
Catholic Bar Association presents  
a Book Review of

**THOMAS BECKET:  
DEFENDER OF THE CHURCH**

By Fr. John S. Hogan

Reviewed by Ryan McCarty of the  
Catholic Lawyers Guild of Kansas City

Today we celebrate the Feast of St. Thomas Becket. Like Thomas More some centuries later, Thomas Becket is acclaimed amongst the communion of saints as a martyr of the highest order who stood up to a king and spoke truth to power. While many are tangentially familiar with the 1964 film starring Richard Burton in the titular role (especially the excommunication scene); alas, the real-life saint and his real-life story have faded somewhat from popular culture.

Fortunately, just a few years ago, his story was given new breath with the publication of a book by Fr. John S. Hogan, a priest of the Diocese of Meath in Ireland. Aptly titled "*Thomas Becket: Defender of the Church*" and published by Our Sunday Visitor, the book is able in 472 pages to delve much deeper than the movie into such a complex and nuanced person as Thomas Becket. The book does well to reintroduce this enigmatic saint, and invites the reader to reconsider his early life, his influences, his progress in his profession, and his personal struggle for holiness. The reader is provided a more complete portrayal of his character—his desires and motivations, as well as his external and internal conflicts—and so comes away with a newfound appreciation for the human drama that unfolded in twelfth century England; and how one man saved his own soul and the proverbial soul of his country by standing up to its king. Even more, the reader will better understand and appreciate how necessary now are the modeling of his virtues to defend the Church from the forces that seek her destruction in the present day. This is true especially among lawyers.

*Thomas Becket: Defender of the Church* is available to purchase online in paperback or electronic versions, or at your local Catholic bookstore.