

Father Drinan's Hat Removed from Ring

Boston (RNS) — Rep. Robert F. Drinan, the liberal Jesuit priest-congressman, has canceled re-election plans in obedience to a worldwide directive of Pope John Paul II barring Catholic priests from holding high public office.

"It is with regret and pain that I accept the decision of the Holy See," Father Drinan said at a press conference here. "I am grateful to have had these opportunities to be a moral architect."

The 59-year-old Jesuit said it was "just unthinkable" for him to consider leaving the priesthood as an alternative to the papal decision.

"I am proud and honored to be a priest and a Jesuit," he said. "As a person of faith, I must believe that there is work for me to do that somehow will be more important than the work I am required to leave."

He said he hopes to continue working to alleviate

world hunger and against the nuclear arms race.

Father Edward O'Flaherty, the congressman's Jesuit superior, said at the press conference that he believed Pope John Paul's decision was based on "convictions about the proper role of a priest which perhaps differ somewhat in emphasis from those of his predecessor."

"There was no intention to single out Father Drinan for criticism," he said, adding that it was "obvious in the pope's

view the reasons that commended Father Drinan's candidacy up to now no longer apply."

In Washington, a spokesman for the apostolic delegate, Archbishop Jean Jadot, acknowledged that the decree originated in the Vatican and was worldwide in its effects. In each case, a priest's bishop or superior general was notified by the Vatican to pass on the information.

Pope Paul VI there were considering a crackdown on priests holding public office.

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy



On the Right Side

O'Connor says: "To expect too much is to have a sentimental view of life, and this is softness which ends in bitterness."

Do you agree with Father Catoir?

Better Not Criticize The Preacher

What do you think of the preaching from Catholic pulpits?

More to the point, what do you think of it? A recent OTRS column commented: "One of the greatest weaknesses for our preaching is that no one critiques us." People often tell me of some sermon they have heard — sometimes favorably, sometimes not. I think our people are often perceptive in detecting questionable theology or scripture. One knowledgeable man told me, "Our Father X likes to be ahead of the crowd, and often comes through with weird interpretations of the Gospel." He was describing Christ walking upon the waters and declared, "Christ probably wasn't really walking on the waters, but it was shallow water and he seemed to be walking on the waters. My wife nudged me and whispered, 'I wonder why Peter was sinking.' (I know Father X and find he has a Bultmanish compulsion to eliminate the supernatural from the Scriptures.)"

Do you think we should tell the preacher how we react to his sermon?

Oh, be cautious! Most priests assume they are quite good preachers. I think that few would take negative criticism kindly. It would be an interesting experiment. Father John Catoir, director of The Christophers, wrote an article in the April Eucharist entitled "Tell the Preacher." It reads: "The response to the Sunday sermon can range from gratitude to criticism to annoyance to pure outrage. Unfortunately, none of these reactions ever reach the ear of the preacher. Why? Because few people have the courage to do what needs to be done: namely, to initiate open, honest communication. Recently, The Christophers conducted a national survey in which 3,000 high school students were polled on their attitudes toward church. One question was: What attracts you least about your church? The winner by a large margin was the Sunday sermon. I think a large percentage of adults would agree with this view."

What does he suggest? He proceeds: "How do

you reach the preacher? Very simply. You write him a signed letter. Tell him your reactions, your feelings about his ideas, his delivery. Be constructive and positive, but don't pull any punches. The purpose is not to vent your emotions but to improve the quality of preaching in your church. There are some preachers who have the gift but fail to develop it. They do not prepare well enough, or they lack passion, fire, conviction. The listener needs to be tempered, however, with a large dose of realism. God's gifts are not distributed equally. While we're at it, why not inform the preacher when one of his homilies particularly impresses you? Flannery

If you want to send a signed letter explaining how a priest's sermon could be improved, you'd better send it to some priest you heard on vacation, perhaps in Oregon or Dublin. I doubt your parish priests would take criticism with grace. It might be acceptable to some if, instead of writing to them, you discussed the homily for effectiveness, accuracy, delivery, over a cup of coffee. Of course, if you are going to say something pleasant about the homily, you could do that safely in your own parish. I suspect that the priest getting such a letter would admire your judgment and suggest you be elected to the parish council.

Other sources said that the pope had acted largely out of concern for political activity on the part of priests in Latin America.

Supporters of Father Drinan said that when he received word of the new ruling from Jesuit headquarters in Rome, he sought to appeal and did not make the news public until after receiving word that the appeal had been turned down.

Father Drinan served 14 years as dean of the law school at Boston College before being elected to Congress in 1970 as an anti-Vietnam War candidate. He is best known as having been the representative who introduced the legislation to impeach Richard Nixon, an action which helped to lead the president to resign.

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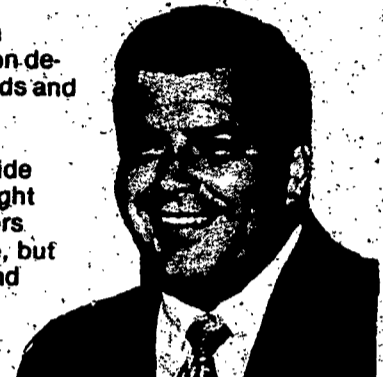
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