

Can Catholics serve in public office?



MORE LETTERS

acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered'".

The Catholic Church could not make it any clearer that homosexuality is absolutely immoral, and a Catholic does not have a choice about that — and still consider himself a Catholic.

Of course we should love the homosexual person, but that does not mean we compromise on the wrongness of homosexual behavior as Sister Schoelles seems to be suggesting.

Rev. William J. Cosgrove
Chestnut Ridge Road
Rochester

Parental OK not absolute

To the editor:

In the July 3 *Catholic Courier*, a well thought-out letter with correct conclusions ("Inform public about surgery") did have one glaring error. The author states that "no treatment can be given to a minor child without parental consent save in their absence in life-threatening situations." Unfortunately, there are modern examples of children being given medical treatment not only without expressed consent but in direct opposition to the stated desire of the parents. Vaccination is a prime example, with states often denying parental authority. Medical administration of birth control, even including abortion, without parental knowledge or con-

sent is an even more troubling example.

Howard Hadley, D.C.
Tumbleweed Drive
Pittsford

Strength, not study, needed

To the editor:

The account of the spring meeting of Catholic bishops was disturbing. Relative to convening a plenary, the bishops could not decide what to call it: a plenary, a synod or something else. They decided on more study. Further they could not decide on the theme and issues.

As the Church becomes unable to minister to the needs of its members, it is a time for action not study. We are all aware that the most pressing challenge in the Catholic Church is to fill the rank of the clergy. We and the bishops also know that many well qualified lay people are available for ordination. The problem: They do not meet the Church's criteria.

Aggressive use of our bishops' power and prestige can bring about the necessary reforms. With inaction, the Church will soon not be able to carry out the Lord's work. If this happens, our Church becomes irrelevant and a second reformation will take place. The time for strength and leadership by our bishops is now.

Ted Krenzer
East River Road
Rush

The question has been with us at least since the 16th century when Thomas More sought to reconcile service to the king as lord chancellor, but of late the topic has been in the forefront of Washington politics.

Case 1: Sen. Rick Santorum, Catholic, and at 45 one of the Republican Party's rising stars. Recently, the Pennsylvania senator defended the right of Texas to keep homosexual sodomy a crime. Said Santorum: "I have no problem with homosexuality. I have a problem with homosexual acts." Consequence: Calls for his resignation from his leadership post. Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-SD, said the sentiments Santorum expressed are "out of step with our country's respect for tolerance."

Case 2: Carolyn Kuhl, Catholic, superior court judge in California, nominated for the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. As a deputy U.S. solicitor general, Kuhl argued that "Roe v. Wade" should be overturned. Consequence: Her nomination is stalled on the Senate floor.

Case 3: J. Leon Holmes, Catholic, former president of the Arkansas Right to Life, nominated by President Bush to the federal district court in Arkansas. A vocal defender of the Catholic conception of marriage, Holmes wrote: "The marital relationship symbolizes the relationship between Christ and the church. [Catholic teaching]



Douglas W. Kmiec

involves a mutual self-giving, a reciprocal gift of self. This teaching is not inconsistent with the equality of all persons, male and female." Consequence: Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) said: "This guy is so far off the deep end that can't we call a halt to this at some point?" The Judiciary Committee has thus far refused to vote on his nomination.

Case 4: William Pryor, Catholic, attorney general of Alabama. Pryor, too, has been avowedly pro-life, calling abortion the worst legal "abomination." And Pryor, like Santorum, has defended the right of Texas and other states to punish homosexual practice. Wrote Pryor in a Supreme Court brief: "The category of morality [has always been] among state concerns. The laws regarding marriage ... as well as laws forbidding adultery, fornication and homosexual practice form a pattern so deeply pressed into the substance of our social life that any constitutional doctrine must be built upon that basis." Consequence: Disbelief and disparagement. Ralph Neas, executive director of the liberal nonprofit People for the

American Way, called Pryor "one of the most dangerous judicial nominees of this administration that we've seen yet."

The U.S. Constitution is designed to ameliorate the conflict between faith and public service. The First Amendment guarantees all of us, including Catholics interested in public service, the "free exercise" of faith, and Article VI admonishes that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust."

Facing a skeptical Protestant convention in his 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy largely pledged to put his faith aside. "I believe in a president whose religious views are his own private affair."

Thomas More took a different course. He did not seek out unnecessary conflict with the crown, but he did not dissemble either. Willing to give even the devil the benefit of law, More sought to persuade through legal and moral argument. When that failed to avert either the divorce or the king's brazen claim of supremacy over the church, More resigned. But even at his execution More was still "the king's good servant, but God's first."

Apparently, nearing 500 years later, it remains to be seen if that order of priority is possible in America.

Douglas W. Kmiec is a guest columnist for Catholic News Service.

Letters Policy

The *Catholic Courier* provides space for readers to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original, signed letters about current issues affecting church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the opinions expressed.

Letters must not exceed 300 words. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable. We reserve the right to edit letters for legal and other concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only.

Mail letters to: *Catholic Courier*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624 or e-mail to letters@catholiccourier.com. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for verification.