

TWIN ASSAULT ON CONSCIENCE RIGHTS

What do the Obama administration and Marquette University have in common? Neither respects conscience rights.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has issued an important statement on a new Department of Labor regulation that implements President Obama's Executive Order of July 21 prohibiting government contractors from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. It cited the Catholic Catechism.

The Catechism opposes all "unjust discrimination" against homosexuals, allowing for instances when drawing distinctions on the basis of sexual orientation accord with justice. It appears, the bishops indicate, that the Department of Labor regulation does not meet the test of justice.

The USCCB said that its early read on the regulation indicates that it prohibits "far more than that of 'unjust discrimination.'" Furthermore, the executive order upon which it is based, the bishops said, was "objectionable."

Referring to the regulations, the bishops said they appear "to prohibit employers' religious and moral disapproval of same-sex conduct, which creates a serious threat to freedom of conscience and religious liberty, because '[u]nder no circumstances' may Catholics approve of such conduct."

Jesuit institutions such as Marquette University share Obama's position. At a recent "anti-harassment" training presentation, employees of the university were told that merely voicing objections to gay marriage may be considered discriminatory; they were urged to report such offenses. Which begs the question: Would they bring the pope up on charges following a speech on marriage?

The contempt for conscience rights, our first freedom, is no longer coming from barbarians abroad—home-grown ones are inside our gates.