

BISHOPS BLASTED OVER GAY MARRIAGE

The passage of the New York same-sex marriage bill, over the objections from the Catholic hierarchy, led to a storm of criticism of the state's bishops. The most extreme condemnation came from an editorial in the National Catholic Reporter (NCR).

The Catholic hierarchy, said NCR, "has lost most of its credibility with the wider culture on matters of sexuality and personal morality, just as it has lost its authority within the Catholic community on the same issues." It also said that the bishops are engaged in everything from "wholesale excommunications" to "open warfare" with dissidents.

The popular "out-of-touch" criticism of the bishops on gay marriage rested on two faulty assumptions: (a) there is a divide between the bishops and the faithful on this issue, and (b) the bishops should take their cues from the laity.

To begin with, there is a profound difference between the views of practicing Catholics and nominal ones. There is also a divide between what the public tells a pollster and the results in a ballot box. In the 31 states where the voters were given the opportunity to decide on gay marriage, many of the polls going into the election showed that the supporters would carry the day. The final tally has been 31-0 against gay marriage.

More important, the bishops have a different charge: they are obliged to do what is morally right. But if NCR wants the bishops to follow the laity, is it prepared to have the hierarchy junk its rejection of the death penalty? After all, two-thirds of Catholics believe in it, so why not the bishops? Will NCR now campaign for the death penalty, lecturing the

bishops to get in line with the laity? Its hypocrisy is
stunning