

CATHOLIC DEMOCRAT PLAYS THE VICTIM CARD

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a Catholic politician who is claiming victim status:

New Mexico State Sen. Joe Cervantes, a Catholic, was recently denied Holy Communion because he is pro-abortion. Now he is playing his constituents, as well as the general public. He wants everyone to think that he is the victim of Catholic persecution, when, in fact, he deliberately sought to place himself in a position so that he could make this false claim.

The teaching of the Catholic Church on abortion is very clear: it opposes the killing of innocent human life. In modern times, science has ratified what the Church has long taught, namely that life begins at conception. Cervantes knows this to be true, and he also knows that his pro-abortion stance is not in keeping with the teachings of the Catholic Church. More important, his recent bid to receive the Eucharist was done to create a stir.

There is a 1969 law in New Mexico that criminalizes abortion. It has never been enforced. That's because *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion in 1973, made it moot. For grandstanding purposes, two years ago pro-abortion politicians like Cervantes sought to repeal this law. They failed.

It is common practice in the Catholic Church in the United States for priests and bishops who live in an area where pro-abortion Catholics live to reach out to them in dialogue. The goal of this outreach effort is to persuade the office holder of the seriousness of abortion and the need to respect the Church's teachings on this subject. In other words, contrary to what some in the media say, the clergy do not take cheap public shots at wayward Catholic politicians. Regrettably, the

obverse is frequently not true.

According to the Diocese of Las Cruces, both the pastor at Cervantes' church, and the local bishop, Peter Baldacchino, "reached out to him [Cervantes] multiple times in order to convey to him the teaching of the Catholic Church." And what did he do? He blew them off. "Cervantes never answered or responded to diocesan communications."

This was not the end of the outreach effort. The pastor of Cervantes' church "advised him [Cervantes] that a vote in favor of this particular Senate bill would constitute a grave moral evil and that he should not present himself for Communion." In other words, Cervantes sought to receive Communion on July 16th, knowing full well he would be denied. He did so purposefully.

Those who are not Catholic should know that it would have been perfectly legitimate for Cervantes to join the Communion line and then, instead of receiving the Eucharist, he could have elected to put his hands across his torso (one arm crossed over the other) and bow his head. At that point the priest would have blessed him. But this is not what Cervantes did. He wanted to be denied so he could claim victim status.

Phony Catholics have always been with us. But today we have an abundance of them, especially in political circles. That such persons are found at the national level as well is even more disturbing.

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