

CATHOLICISM ON TRIAL

President George W. Bush has nominated J. Leon Holmes to serve as a federal judge for eastern Arkansas. But his nomination has run into trouble with some Democrats who believe Holmes is too religious. Holmes is a convert to Catholicism and is strongly pro-life.

Judge Leon Holmes has stellar credentials. He graduated first in his law school class; he holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Duke University; he has had a distinguished legal career spanning more than two decades; he has been endorsed by the American Bar Association; he has won the plaudits of his hometown newspaper, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*; he is held in high esteem by his colleagues; and he is known by his ideological foes as a man “shot through with integrity.” But this convert to Catholicism has upset some Democrats.

Holmes is a man of deep religious conviction. He is pro-life and is fully supportive of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. But in the eyes of some, this is a red flag. They seize upon a flip comment he made 23 years ago (for which he has apologized) about abortion. What really irks his critics is that he will not apologize for his pro-life convictions. This notwithstanding the fact that Holmes already has said that only a constitutional amendment could overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Holmes has written on the fundamental equality of men and women. He and his wife have also written on the positive meaning of the mutual subjection of husbands and wives. Yet Senators Schumer, Feinstein and Durbin have unfairly tagged him a misogynist, misunderstanding what the pope, the U.S. bishops and Holmes have said regarding this matter.

As we said to the media, “Holmes’ critics are doing what the Constitution expressly prohibits—they are applying a religious

test to his nomination. That they are doing it in a back-door manner makes it all the more contemptible.”

On May 8, Judge Holmes’ nomination was voted out of the Judiciary Committee and has been sent to the floor of the Senate for a vote. It would be a grave injustice if he is not appointed as a district court judge.