

Church teaching not an obligation in government

Russell Shaw ("Catholic President not necessarily good news for the Church," CR/Aug. 30) seems to assume that Catholics have an obligation to apply the dogmas of the church to civil government of the United States. There can be no such obligation.

The words of the Article VI of the Constitution govern the matter:

"This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding.

The senators and representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

The wording is inescapable: that the oath taken by every government official in the United States to support the U.S. Constitution requires them to place it as the supreme law of the land. Any Catholic who takes that oath must not accept direction by church officials as to what American civil law should be. Any Catholic who cannot live up to that oath should not enter or remain in public service. President Kennedy, Senator Kennedy and Attorney General Curran, and many others, have honored their oaths.