

Second column clarifies archbishop's stand on Communion for governor

WASHINGTON - Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kan., has reiterated his request that Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius not receive Communion until she publicly repudiates her support for abortion, but said he will not ask eucharistic ministers to refuse to give her Communion.

The archbishop answered questions about his stand in the May 23 issue of *The Leaven*, archdiocesan newspaper, saying he had received "a significant number of pro and con communications" about his column in the newspaper two weeks earlier.

"In my request to Gov. Sebelius, I have made clear that it is her responsibility not to present herself for reception of Holy Communion," he wrote. "I am hopeful that she will comply with this request."

But Archbishop Naumann also said that "pastorally, it is certainly preferable not to burden ministers of the Eucharist with the responsibility to refuse Communion to someone," although such ministers "do have an obligation to protect the sacrament from misuse or abuse."

"I have, at this moment, not asked the ministers of the Eucharist not to give holy Communion to the governor," he added.

He said he made his initial request to the governor before she vetoed the Comprehensive Abortion Reform Act, which would have placed new requirements on abortion providers. An attempt to override the veto failed by two votes in the Kansas Senate.

Archbishop Naumann said that as a state representative, Gov. Sebelius "voted to weaken or eliminate even such modest measures as parental notification for teens, waiting periods or informed consent protections for women before an abortion."

“My request for the governor not to be present herself for Communion was not about any one action, but a 30-year history of advocating and acting in support of legalized abortion,” he said.

Gov. Sebelius spokeswoman Brittany Stiffler said May 27 that the governor is “still working on her response” to Archbishop Naumann’s first column and did not have any comment at this time.

The archbishop’s column, in question-and-answer format, responded to a number of points raised by those who had contacted him, including why Gov. Sebelius was singled out, when a Catholic should refrain from receiving Communion, whether it is wrong for the church to impose its religious beliefs on others and whether actions like that of Archbishop Naumann constitute an attack on Democratic politicians.

He said Gov. Sebelius, a Democrat, holds the state’s highest elective office and is therefore “the most prominent Catholic in public life” in Kansas.

But Archbishop Naumann said it is “a time-intensive process” to make sure that individual Catholics are “aware of the spiritual and moral consequences of their actions” and he intends eventually “to have similar pastoral dialogues with other Catholics in elective office who support legalized abortion.”

He said Cardinal Edward M. Egan of New York has made a similar request that former Republican presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani, a Republican and a Catholic who supports keeping abortion legal, not receive Communion.

“I encourage Catholics who are Democrats to remain Democrats, but to change the extremist position of the party on abortion,” Archbishop Naumann wrote. “In the end, to create an enduring public policy that will protect the right to life of innocent unborn children, we need to build a consensus that includes both Democrats and Republicans.”

The archbishop quoted extensively from the U.S. bishops’ November 2006 document “Happy Are Those Who Are Called to His Supper,” which offered guidelines for the reception of Communion. It said, “If a Catholic in his or her personal or professional life were knowingly and obstinately to reject the defined doctrines of the church, or

knowingly and obstinately to repudiate her definitive teachings on moral issues, ... he or she would seriously diminish his or her communion with the church.”

In those cases, Catholics should refrain from presenting themselves for the Eucharist, the document says.

Archbishop Naumann said abortion is not “an exclusively religious issue” but a moral one.

“Just as supporting public policies that prohibit stealing, racism or murder – moral issues also very clearly addressed by the church – is not an imposition of Catholic doctrine, neither is advocating for policies that protect human life in its earliest stages,” he said.

Quoting an August 2006 statement by the bishops of Kansas, he said some acts are “intrinsically evil” and “can never be done even as a means to a good end.” In addition to abortion, these include “euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, the destruction of embryonic human beings in stem-cell research, human cloning and same-sex marriage,” Archbishop Naumann said.