

Loverde and Wuerl respond to Burke, Terry

Daniel Burke Religion News Service | Mar. 29, 2009

WASHINGTON -- Two of the U.S. bishops criticized by an anti-abortion activist and the American archbishop who heads the Vatican's supreme court said they follow the guidelines approved the the U.S. bishops in 2004.

Archbishop Raymond Burke, formerly of St. Louis, has apologized for the "confusion and hurt" caused by his criticism of fellow bishops who do not deny Communion to Catholic politicians who support abortion rights.

He was interviewed earlier this month by an anti-abortion activist in Rome, where he now is Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura.

Burke implicitly criticized Archbishop Donald Wuerl of Washington and Bishop Paul Loverde of Arlington, Va., for not denying Communion to Catholic politicians who buck the church's anti-abortion stance. Wuerl and Loverde were singled out because so many politicians live and work in their jurisdictions.

Loverde told Religion News Service March 27 that individual Catholics must determine their fitness to receive Communion.

"If you are Catholic, you have the responsibility to think carefully about what it means to present yourself for Communion," he said. "You should present yourself for Communion when you are in harmony with the church's teaching, free of mortal sin and living your life accordingly, and not receive when you are not."

Susan Gibbs, spokeswoman for the Archdiocese of Washington, said March 27 that the U.S. bishops overwhelmingly decided in 2004 to allow individual bishops to determine a Communion policy for their diocese.

Wuerl's policy is "to respect the pastoral directives and guidance given to a public official by his or her own bishop while the official is working in Washington, D.C.," Gibbs said. "That individual's bishop presumably would know the person and the situation best and, therefore, be in a position to make a judgment about or a request concerning the person's worthiness to receive Holy Communion."

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