

In Maryland, a 21st century church-state exchange

Tom Roberts | Aug. 9, 2011 NCR Today

Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley and Baltimore Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien recently engaged in an exchange of letters that signifies both how Catholic influence has grown within U.S. culture and the Catholic Church's struggle with that very same culture.

It is a 21st century exchange between a Catholic church leader and a well educated Catholic civic leader in a pluralistic society where matters of justice and rights can look quite different depending on what side of the divide one is standing.

O'Malley is a Catholic (he attended Our Lady of Lourdes School in Bethesda and Gonzaga College High School and graduated from The Catholic University of America), and a regular Mass attender who's sent his children to Catholic schools. He's openly on record as an advocate for a list of issues that match up to the church's social justice agenda. But he's also recently announced plans to sponsor a same-sex marriage bill.

The archbishop, suggesting that O'Malley is motivated "by mere political expediency," urged the governor to reconsider sponsoring the bill that would "deeply conflict" with his faith.

O'Malley responded that "when shortcomings in our laws bring about a result that is unjust, I have a public obligation to try to change that injustice."

O'Malley also told O'Brien he would never "question or infringe upon your freedom to define, to preach about and to administer the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church." At the same time, he said, "I respect your freedom to disagree with me as a citizen and as a religious leader without questioning your motives."

Read John Wagner's full report in the Washington Post [here](#). [1]

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[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/dc-politics/omalley-archbishop-at-odds-over-same-sex-marriage-letters-show/2011/08/08/gIQA4vR02I_print.html