

Cardinal Dolan: Moral lessons for President Trump and Gov. Cuomo
Consistency, please

BYTIMOTHY CARDINAL DOLAN

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Recently, over an enjoyable meal, a rabbi friend and I discussed at length a litany of controversial issues, from immigration to the death penalty; from minimum wage to abortion; from prison reform to physician-assisted-suicide. We agreed on some, differed on others. At the end of our pleasant conversation, my colleague teased me, “The trouble with you is that you’re so damn consistent!”

I take that as a compliment! Our belief in the dignity of the human person, and the sanctity of human life — a conviction the rabbi and I share — leads to what we Catholics call a “consistent ethic of life,” what Pope St. John Paul II called a “culture of life,” what Pope Francis refers to as “an ecology of inclusion and protection for the most vulnerable.”

This leads us to affirm the civil rights of the innocent baby in the womb and to oppose the death penalty; to advocate for both the vulnerable refugee and for the struggling laborer. This consistency is hardly unique to us Catholics, but characterizes the values of people of many religions, or none at all. It’s a bedrock principle of this great Republic founded upon certain self-evident, inalienable rights.

Recently, we’ve been let down by our national and state executives. President Trump’s impetuous and terribly unfair executive order closing the historically open door of America to certain immigrants, just because of their country of origin, cheapens their human dignity, and, in many cases, places their lives and future in danger. It is contrary to the teachings of the Bible Christians and Jews cherish, and at odds with the celebrated reputation for hospitality the nation we love enjoys.

Even my brother Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil, who was coming for a visit this week as my guest to advocate on behalf of his suffering people in Iraq, is now closed out. Protecting our borders and strengthening background checks? Fair enough. Blanket refusals to allow immigrants from a given nation, ethnic, or religious group? No way.

Gov. Cuomo's recent proposed radical extension of an abortion license in this state, already the most extreme in the nation, advocating the right to an abortion at any stage of the nine-month stay of the baby in the womb, is a cause for concern to the 74% of Americans who, according to the Marist Poll of last week, feel abortion needs prudent restrictions. His insistence that we all pay for those abortions is only more upsetting.

Strange: Last week, Trump showed admirable solicitude for the innocent baby in the womb with a series of benevolent executive orders. Then he displayed callousness to another group who are also fragile and vulnerable, the immigrants and refugees.

Strange: Cuomo has long been a leader in advocating for the rights of refugees, so appropriate for an American, especially a New Yorker, where we daily see the gift that immigrants are. Then he advances laws to invade the most fundamental and natural sanctuary of them all, the womb cradling an unborn baby.

As usual, Pope Francis hit the nail on the head with his prophetic words to Congress during his pastoral visit to the United States in 2015. He reminded us that the world is facing a "refugee crisis of a magnitude not seen since World War II," and that we must "respond in a way which is always humane, just and fraternal. We need to avoid a common temptation nowadays: to discard whatever proves troublesome.

"Let us remember the golden rule: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' (Matthew 7:12). This rule points us in a clear direction. . . . In a word, if we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities. The yardstick we use for others will be the yardstick which time will use for us. The golden rule also reminds us of our responsibility to protect and defend human life at every stage of its development."

Thanks, Mr. President, for your concern for the baby in the womb. Can you show the same for the threatened immigrant?

Thanks, Mr. Governor, for your eloquent defense of the immigrant welcomed by Lady Liberty, at the door to the state you govern. Can you show the same solicitude for the infant awaiting birth?

Some consistency, please . . .