

Happy Monday to all,

On this date- June 22, in 2018, Stephanie Wilkinson, the co-owner of The Red Hen restaurant in Lexington, Virginia, asked then-White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders to leave her restaurant. Wilkinson made the decision after consulting with her staff. Most were uncomfortable serving Sanders due to her public defense of the 2018 Trump administration's policies. Wilkinson subsequently explained that she believed Sanders—a high profile public official—willingly defended the president's cruelest policies.

And.... the Red Hen was well within its legal rights to deny Sanders service.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it against federal law to deny people service based on their race, sex, religion, national origin, or color. Political affiliation or association is notably absent from that list. State discrimination laws vary, but refusing service to someone based on their political affiliation or ideology is only illegal in Washington, D.C., the city of Seattle, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**However.....**Catholic Social Teachings (CST) and the Church's broader moral traditions *do not* support the denial of basic services to individuals based on their political views, public advocacy, or moral choices. The Church teaches that human dignity is primary, absolute and not contingent on a person's political beliefs.

Serving the needs of others (even if that need is breaking bread at a quite dinner out with friends), is supported by several Church teachings:

- **Inherent Human Dignity:** All humans are made in the image and likeness of God and they possess an inherent dignity that must be respected regardless of their actions, political stances, or sins.
- **Universal, Unconditional, Love For and Charity Toward Our Neighbor:** Catholic teaching emphasizes love for one's neighbor, following the model of Jesus who openly and freely ministered to sinners and outcasts. Withholding services acts as a form of condemnation and judgment rather than the culture of kindness and mercy the Church promotes.

Intrinsically evil acts are always opposed, but just the *act itself*- not the individual. Many people who have committed an act of intrinsic evil have also performed or supported many acts that were intrinsically good and which promoted the common good.

At the end of the day, each of us must make decisions on issues that fall into the gray areas. The restaurant owners had to make a moral and ethical decision, taking action that they believed to be the best. Was the greater good served in responding to the sensitivities of staff and patrons, heading off what could become an unfolding and escalating situation ... or continuing to serve all the guests (including Huckabee-Sanders) as long as the situation remained safe and calm?

Catholic Charities has been accused of operating according to a certain political agenda, rather than strictly serving as the charitable arm of an apolitical religious institution.

I, along with others, have stated many times that Catholic Charities does not have a political agenda, does not support or promote a political affiliation, and does not assist and serve clients based on political ideologies. We base all that we do on Catholic Social teaching and operate according to the guidance of our local Bishop and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

<https://www.usccb.org/resources/Seven%20Themes%20of%20CST%20Two-Page%20Resource.pdf>

We do not inquire into the federally protected categories or unprotected categories of anyone who comes to us seeking assistance. We see each individual as the image and likeness of God and we respect their inherent dignity. We operate on a system that acknowledges that the distribution of resources should be equitable— thus maintaining a healthier, more robust, and inherently just society.

We cannot do it without YOU. It is your sacrifices of time, talent and treasure that allow us to provide hope, health and healing to the poor, the marginalized, the elderly, disabled, our veterans as well as to our sacred environment.

Thank you and God's blessings to all!

Deacon Mike