

Vatican orders Canadian priest out of politics

Deborah Gyapong Catholic News Service | Sep. 6, 2008

OTTAWA, Canada -- Fr. Raymond Gravel said he will step down as a Bloc Quebecois member of Canada's House of Commons after receiving an ultimatum from the Vatican.

"My bishop had received instructions from Rome that I must make a choice between the priesthood and the calling of an MP (member of Parliament)," Gravel told the French-language newspaper *La Presse*. "There was the threat of laicization and they could defrock me."

Noting he would respect the Vatican's decision, he said, "It's my life, to be a priest," *La Presse* reported Sept. 3.

Gravel, 55, who publicly had supported same-sex marriage and abortion before entering political life, advocated positions contrary to church teaching, despite instructions from his bishop.

Bishop Gilles Lussier of Joliette, Quebec, had stripped Gravel of his priestly functions when he ran for office in 2006. He won with more than 60 percent of the vote.

Gravel told *La Presse* that many English-speaking Catholics complained to the Vatican about his controversial stands.

He told *The Globe and Mail* in Toronto that his remarks on abortion were "misinterpreted."

In March, Gravel voted against the Unborn Victims of Crime Act, a bill that would have recognized unborn children as victims if they are killed or harmed as result of a violent crime against the mother.

Gravel also publicly supported the July appointment of Dr. Henry Morgentaler, an abortionist, to the Order of Canada.

Gravel said he received a letter from Cardinal William J. Levada, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Cardinal Claudio Hummes, president of the Congregation for Clergy.

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