NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

The Confused Congressman From Florida

Michael Sean Winters | Jan. 6, 2011 Distinctly Catholic

This is not pretty to watch. Congressman Allen West, newly elected Tea Party favorite from Florida, criticized President Obama because, on his recent visit to Afghanistan, he did not physically endanger himself by going up to the front lines of the combat zone. Appearing on Lawrence O'Donnell's show "The Last Word," last night, O'Donnell gave West the opportunity to back off his outrageous criticism. West declined, arguing that true leadership requires putting oneself in the line of fire, and that he had learned this while a Marine.

Mr. West seems not to understand the difference between a soldier and a president. Of course, it is horrible that our soldiers are exposed to mortal danger and the loss of life, of any life, is a tragedy. But the death of a soldier in combat is not the occasion of a constitutional crisis. The death of a president is. Mr. West and his fellow Tea Partyers like to wax eloquent about the Constitution, but he at least seems to have little awareness of the demands it places on those elected to high office. It would be beyond reckless to endanger a president to make a point. And while a military officer can and should share the dangers to which his troops are exposed, indeed, it is impossible to understand a battlefield without the awareness such exposure provides, a president serves a different function. For starters, he is not a military leader but a civilian one. But, perhaps that part of the Constitution escaped West's attention.

This is outrageous. I do not care if West retracts his foolishness. He would only do so for political reasons at this point. He clearly belives what he said. And that is the scary part.

Here is the video:

Source URL (retrieved on *04/01/2015 - 01:27*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/confused-congressman-florida