

Archbishop won't deny Communion to Irish pols over abortion bill

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Irish Catholic politicians and Parliament members who voted for a controversial law that allows abortion under certain circumstances will not be excommunicated or denied Communion, the future primate of Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin, said.

Speaking on a Radio Ulster program, Martin said he never refused Communion to anyone. But he reiterated the Roman Catholic church's official position that it is not possible to be a person of faith and, at the same time, actively promote abortion.

He told the BBC that every individual who voted in favor of the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act, which passed overwhelmingly July 12 in the Irish Parliament, should question whether they actively promoted the killing of the unborn.

The new law allows doctors to perform the pregnancy termination procedure under certain conditions, such as if the mother's life is at risk.

It has caused controversy in once strongly Catholic Ireland and created its first ministerial casualty after the junior European minister, Lucinda Creighton, was expelled from Prime Minister Enda Kenny's Irish Fine Gael party.

Kenny is regarded as a devout Catholic who is being talked about as a front-runner for the presidency of the European Union when the position becomes vacant in December 2014.

This week, Irish newspapers carried stories expressing surprise and delight that the archbishop will not excommunicate Kenny and his parliamentary supporters.

On July 10, the BBC website quoted Martin saying that Irish politicians who vote knowingly for abortion are acting "in co-operation with evil."

It further quoted him saying: "Whatever happens in this vote, the direct and intentional killing of any person is always gravely immoral."

More than 4,000 Irish women traveled to British hospitals over the last 12 months to have abortions. About 124 were under 18 years of age. The new law does not include exceptions for women who have been raped, meaning that the traffic across the Irish Sea to hospitals in England, Wales and Scotland will continue for some time.

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