

Catholics on watch for faith 'test' of nominee: Groups to guard against derailment of Roberts nomination

News in the [August 9, 2005](#) issue

Catholic groups say they will guard against any attempt to use religious faith to derail the nomination of Judge John Roberts, a mass-going Catholic, to the U.S. Supreme Court.

They pointed to the very Constitution that Roberts would swear to uphold and its prohibition against using any type of “religious test” as a qualification for higher office.

“A person’s religious faith, and how they live that faith as an individual, has no bearing and no place in the confirmation hearing,” said Joe Cella, president of a new Catholic group, Fidelis, formed to support conservative judges.

The debate in some ways is an extension of last year’s election-year tug-of-war, focused on Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry, over what it means to be a Catholic in public life.

By all accounts, Roberts attends mass weekly at the Church of the Little Flower in Bethesda, Maryland. Growing up in Indiana, he attended a Catholic high school.

Church leaders in Washington generally declined to comment in mid-July, citing privacy concerns. But those who know him say Roberts is no religious zealot, but rather a quiet family man of firm faith.

“John is a guy who goes to mass, he’s a practicing Catholic, but . . . like most Catholics who are serious about their faith, it’s not something they talk about a lot, it’s something that he lives,” said Shannen Coffin, an attorney who has known Roberts for a dozen years.

If confirmed, Roberts will join Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia and Anthony Kennedy as Catholics on the high court. *-Religion News Service*