

Faith Digest

April 21, 2011

Court fails to deliver for Adventists. Neither snow nor rain nor Saturday Sabbaths should keep a Missouri mailman from his appointed rounds, a federal appeals court has ruled. [Seventh-day Adventist](#) Hosea Harrell argued he was the victim of religious discrimination when the U.S. Postal Service refused to give him Saturdays off. Harrell took the days off anyway and was fired in 2008. Like Jews, Seventh-day Adventists observe the Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, and they believe the day should be kept holy by refraining from secular work. But the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, upholding a lower court decision, ruled that giving Harrell Saturdays off would create an “undue hardship” for his fellow mail carriers and the post office where he worked. Also, the Warrensburg post office schedule is determined by seniority and could not have been changed without violating a collective bargaining agreement with a mail carriers’ union, according to the circuit judge. Harrell was the most junior letter carrier. The six other mail carriers were asked to give up their Saturdays but declined. Harrell was offered a different position with the USPS and leave to attend church services on Saturday, but rejected both offers, according to the judge. The routes could not have been covered using fewer carriers, the USPS argued.

American Catholics support gay rights. Although the Vatican and U.S. Catholic bishops maintain a hard-line stand against most gay rights causes, American Catholics are more supportive of gay rights than other Christians in the United States, according to new research. A report by Washington-based [Public Religion Research Institute](#) found 74 percent of Catholics favor legal recognition for same-sex relationships—either civil unions (31 percent) or civil marriage (43 percent). That figure is higher than the 64 percent of all Americans, 67 percent of mainline Protestants, 48 percent of

black Protestants and 40 percent of evangelicals. Less than one-quarter (22 percent) of Catholics want no legal recognition of same-sex partnerships, while a majority (56 percent) believes same-sex adult relationships are not sinful. The analysis was based on polling conducted by PRRI and the Pew Research Center last fall. In almost every category, Catholics scored 5 to 6 percentage points higher on supporting gay rights than other American churches.

Anglicans want to convert to Catholicism. More than 900 Anglicans formally expressed a desire to convert to Catholicism at special services held at Westminster Cathedral—including the first Anglicans to join a new branch of the Catholic Church. The annual ceremonies included 62 adults who will become Catholics as part of the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham. Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster, head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, presided. Pope Benedict XVI set up the Personal Ordinariate as an extra-geographical body for Anglican converts who left their former church over theological differences, including the consecration of women bishops.