

Panel emphasizes Jesuit values inside and outside the courtroom

BY JENN BALLARD
Law Bulletin staff writer

When appearing before Cook County Circuit Judge Michael J. Howlett Jr., attorneys and their clients are expected to treat each another with civility.

That includes using personal titles.

"Unless you have it written down or you've been given permission to call that poor, uneducated person who's on the witness stand by their first name, you'd better not do that," he said.

"You'd better not say, 'Oh Mary, tell us the story about such and such.' Or, 'Joe, tell us about such and such.' It's 'Mr. Somebody.' It's a small thing, but it's the way I expect people to communicate."

It's his responsibility, Howlett said, to set the tone for the courtroom.

"There is a treatment that I believe is necessary across the board," he said. "It's not only smart because you happen to be Catholic, or relig-

ious or charitable or otherwise. It's just smart."

Howlett was one of the panelists at the Loyola Academy Bar Association event, "Using Your JD for AMDG: Bringing Civility, Professionalism and Catholic Values to the Practice of Law."

Monday's discussion, hosted by Jenner & Block LLP, also included panelists Richard A. Devine — a partner at Meckler, Bulger, Tilson, Marick & Pearson LLP — and Sister Catherine M. Ryan, executive director of Maryville Academy in Des Plaines.

Matthew R. Devine of Jenner & Block moderated.

Howlett and Ryan worked for Richard Devine when he was Cook County state's attorney, a position he held from 1996 to 2008.

When Devine led an office of more than 900 employees as the state's attorney, he said, he tried to "create an atmosphere of fairness and collegiality that allows people to do the work that they do to the highest level."



Michael J. Howlett Jr.

"I found that people who were prosecutors in the office really felt the desire to give something to the community," he said.

Devine, who graduated in 1961 from Loyola Academy in Wilmette, said the school provided "an opportunity to develop a moral framework for your life."

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"When I was there, almost all the teachers were Jesuits; many of the leaders of the extracurriculars were Jesuits," he said.

"That isn't true today because of the numbers, but I think the spirit of what Loyola is about lives on because so many people there went through that process."

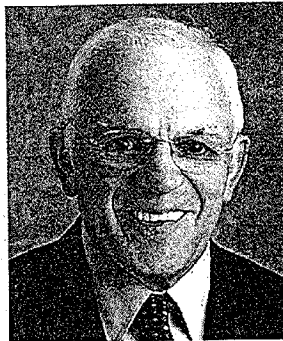
Citing his former colleague as an example, Devine said lawyers should try to find a type of practice that satisfies them.

"I think that goes a long way toward fulfilling what we want to do with our lives," he said, "while at the same time keeping on a path that is consistent with what we've learned along the way."

"I've known Cathy Ryan for 30 plus years now, and every day that I've been with her, she lives this. She lives the values we've learned."

Ryan said her Catholic upbringing taught her to help people resolve their differences peacefully.

"What we contribute as lawyers, where we practice law, needs to contribute to right relationships," she said. "It has to be balanced in order to carry out the different processes we have. That's what we need to be about."



Richard A. Devine

Ryan encouraged those in attendance to "enjoy the practice of law and trust your gut about what it is that you think is right."

"Feel supported by all of us in your decisions to do justice and make right relationships in society as a result of you doing that justice," she said.

Based partly on his Catholic beliefs, Howlett said, he tries to treat each person who appears before him equally.

"Of all the different kinds of (people) that come into my court-



Catherine M. Ryan

house or into my courtroom, I run a cafe of justice," he said.

"I have to make sure each and every person that comes in gets the same tray, gets the same silverware, walks down the same line, gets the same opportunities and is treated as what they are. They are a person who is entitled to each and every right provided to them in the U.S. Constitution."

Howlett said evaluating each defendant based on his or her charges, instead of based on his or her personality, challenges him.



Matthew R. Devine

"Passing judgment shouldn't be something that is easy to do," he said. "When I say, 'five years,' that should mean something to me each and every time I do it — and that happens only if I work at it every day."

The event was the first official meeting of the Loyola Academy Bar Association, a group for graduates of the school who now practice law.

About 100 people attended. They received one hour of Continuing Legal Education credit.

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