

The
Minnesota Catholic



THREE QUALITIES OF A GOOD LAWYER



BY BRENDAN KENNY,
HELLMUTH & JOHNSON

You're not going to believe me when I say this. Although I've been a lawyer for more than 17 years, this the first article I have written for the "public." This raises a simple question for me: "what makes a good lawyer?" Based on St. Ives, the patron saint of lawyers, the bar might be pretty low. He was acclaimed as *advocatus sed non latro, res miranda populo* ("A lawyer yet not a rascal, a thing that made the people wonder"). Or if we adopt the example of St. Thomas More's Utopians, maybe the best lawyer is no lawyer: "They have no lawyers among them, for they consider them as a sort of people whose profession it is to disguise matters and to wrest the laws, and, therefore, they think it is much better that every man should plead his own cause."

But in our world, it seems like we're stuck with lawyers. So what makes a good one? Well, three things—for starters.

Counselor

A lawyer is a different kind of counselor. We have to (as the saying goes) "comfort the disturbed, and disturb the comfortable." Giving good advice means telling people what they need to hear—rather than what they want to hear.

Advocate

A lawyer's primary ethical duty and loyalty is to their client; all other duties flow from that. We should be serving as a true partner to our clients, aligning their legal representation with their goals, challenges, and needs. As my colleague (and

The Minnesota Catholic's industry guide for estate planning) Greg Westerhaus puts it: "I want to help them legally protect their assets from the prying eyes of the tax man."

Prudent warrior

As Senator Chuck Hagel on the eve of the 2003 invasion of Iraq: "Many of those who want to rush this country into war and think it would be so quick and easy don't know a thing about war." The same dynamic seems to be at work among lawyers. Believe it or not, most of my initial calls with potential clients involve me talking them out of litigation, pointing them to litigation alternatives, or proposing ways to litigate as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

That's all I have this month. Please contact me if you have any questions. I'd love to hear from you!

Brendan Kenny is a litigation lawyer at Hellmuth & Johnson, hjlawfirm.com, and can be reached at (952) 746-2139 or bkenny@hjlawfirm.com. When not working, he can be found spending time with his wife and 6 children.

Hellmuth & Johnson is proud to serve as
Minnesota's trusted legal partner.

ON YOUR SIDE. AT YOUR SIDE.



HELLMUTH
&
JOHNSON

(952) 941-4005 // hjlawfirm.com



Brendan Kenny
Litigation Attorney
bkenny@hjlawfirm.com
(952) 746-2139