



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on March 27, 2010

Dad Ordered Not to Expose Daughter to His Faith

A father in Chicago may find himself in jail, if he exposes his young daughter to his Catholic faith. Joseph Reyes is estranged from his ex-wife and is in a bitter divorce battle with her. The couple had agreed to raise their daughter in the mother's Jewish faith, but the family law court, at the request of the mother, ordered Reyes not to bring his three-year-old daughter to Easter services at his church. She told Fox News that she was not anti-Christian, but simply wanted the court's orders to be obeyed.



The family law judge issued the order after the mother asked for a temporary restraining order against the father. If the mother had done nothing, Reyes could have taken his daughter to church without any consequences. The mother's request for a restraining order went beyond just church attendance: It requested an order to keep the father from exposing his daughter to any other faith except the mother's faith. Reyes had already had his daughter baptized, before the court order.

Reyes is a veteran of the Afghan war, and in February he faced a contempt of court charge for this baptism, violating an order that forbade him from "exposing his daughter to any religion but the Jewish religion" according to an earlier report from ABC News. Experts in family law seem to agree on a couple of points. First, when the family law court issues an order, it should be followed. Second, family law courts should not issue orders related to the religious upbringing of children or prohibiting the non-custodial parent from exposing his child to the non-custodial father's faith.

The Chicago court's orders seem certain to create problems. If the father is not allowed to take his young daughter to church, is he also prohibited from saying grace before meals, unless the prayer is deprived of mentioning Christ? If the father wishes to go to Mass, but cannot find child care for his daughter, is it permissible to leave her with a day care run by his church? Can crosses and other Christian symbols be conspicuous in the father's residence? Can the father talk to his daughter about his Christian faith, without violating the court order?

There are more potential issues. Which branch of the Jewish religion is the daughter intended to be raised in? Reform Jews, generally, do not keep Kosher. Orthodox Jews almost always keep Kosher. Conservative Jews (not a political term) may or may not keep Kosher. Orthodox Jews do not have a Bat Mitzvah for adolescent Jewish girls, while Reform Jews have a Bat Mitzvah just like all branches of Judaism have a Bar Mitzvah for adolescence Jewish boys.



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If the mother were an Orthodox Jew, would the non-custodial parent be required to keep a Kosher kitchen? Would the father's home need to be free of unleavened bread during Pesach? The behavior of the two parents during their marriage seems to indicate openness to Judaism and Christianity. The couple celebrated Christmas and Hanukah, Rosh Hashanah and Easter, although, according to Reyes, the couple never went to Temple or to Church regularly.

What happens next in family law court is unclear. Will the family law judge try to restrict how the child, on her own, behaves when she is older? How is "raising" in a particular faith to be interpreted? And will the interpretations and orders provided by family law judges in Chicago be better or more benevolent than those provided by the teachings of either the Catholic or Jewish religions?



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