

# BISHOP BASHING

On February 24, an op-ed column by Joe Feuerherd in the *Washington Post* struck us as bishop bashing, necessitating a news release. It also angered Sister Mary Ann Walsh, spokeswoman for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Feuerherd wrote for the *National Catholic Reporter* for many years, contributing to its dissident voice.

Feuerherd said he was proud to vote for a pro-abortion candidate in the Maryland primary, namely Barack Obama, even if it meant that the bishops have consigned him to Hell. Indeed, according to Feuerherd's interpretation of what the bishops have said, it means that he has put his "soul at risk," all but assuring himself of a "ticket to Hell." He concluded by charging, "the bishops be damned."

Laced in between these absurd remarks, Feuerherd managed to impugn the motives of the bishops, offer snide remarks and misrepresent Church teachings. It no doubt made the *National Catholic Reporter* smile. But as we pointed out, most of what Feuerherd said was patently untrue.

For example, the bishops' document that Feuerherd references, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, says at one point that "It is important to be clear that the political choices faced by citizens...may affect the individual's salvation." Two paragraphs above that one it explicitly says that when all candidates "hold a position in favor of an intrinsic evil," the voter may decide not to vote or to "vote for the candidate deemed less likely to advance such a morally flawed position and more likely to pursue other authentic human goods." In the next paragraph it says, "In the end, this is a decision to be made by each Catholic guided by a conscience formed by Catholic moral teaching." Does this sound like the bishops have condemned him to Hell?

Feuerherd would have us believe that the document lists as “intrinsically evil” such things as “abortion, stem cell research and same-sex marriage.” He is twice wrong. The document does not call either stem cell research or same-sex marriage “intrinsically evil.” There are eight acts which merit that label: abortion, euthanasia, human cloning, the destruction of embryos, genocide, torture, racism and targeting noncombatants in war.

As we said to the press, “Feuerherd is angry because issues like ‘affordable housing’ are not given the same preeminent status as killing the innocent. He is entitled to his opinion, but he is not entitled to bash the bishops or distort their words, not even in his quest for martyrdom.”