

Catholic Bashers Smear Brownback

An e-mail was circulated in late July among evangelicals in Iowa asking them not to split the Christian vote between former Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas and Kansas Senator Sam Brownback; they were urged to vote for Huckabee, an evangelical, over Brownback, a Roman Catholic.

The letter stemmed from Walnut Creek Community Church in Windsor Heights. It said that unlike President George W. Bush, and his father, both of whom had to learn “how to speak to evangelicals,” Governor Huckabee is “one of us.”

The missive continued as follows: “I know Senator Brownback converted to Roman Catholicism in 2002. Frankly, as a recovering Catholic myself, that is all I need to know about his discernment when compared to the Governor’s. I don’t know if this fact is widely known among evangelicals who are supporting Brownback.”

Bill Donohue addressed this issue in a July 31 news release:

“Discernment. Evangelicals have it, and Catholics do not. But are those evangelicals who ex-press themselves this way capable of discerning the difference between persuasiveness and abrasiveness? Do they really think all Catholics are rote-minded robots who let the Vatican do their thinking for them? We thought we’d gotten beyond such nonsense, but apparently some stereotypes are proving hardier than others.

“Like Sam Brownback, Mike Huckabee is a man of character, and as such he would never choose to be associated with such bigotry. The blame for this incident lies squarely with Rev. Tim Rude, pastor of the church. Unfortunately for him, he has now compounded his problem by saying that he did not intend his e-mail to be made public, and that in any event, ‘All I

was trying to say is that Protestants should vote for Protestants.' Great. But now that his gig is up—everyone knows about his stealth campaign against Brownback—the time has come for Rev. Rude (what a great name!) to fess up and apologize. He might also take this opportunity to explain his lack of confidence in the ability of Protestants to discern whom they should vote for in the election.”

Shortly after Donohue’s news release went out, Rev. Rude issued an apology in which he admitted that his references to Catholicism were “careless.” He explained, “I support Governor Huckabee first and Senator Brownback as a close second” and that “in no way do I think a Catholic would not make a great president.” It was telling that Rev. Rude was at first questioning Brownback’s discernment as a Catholic convert, but then in a space of mere hours was making Brownback his second choice (out of more than a dozen candidates) for president.