

CATHOLIC DEMOCRATS CHIDE POPE

Eighteen Democratic members of Congress sent out a statement dated May 10 criticizing Pope Benedict XVI for his supposed stance on Catholic politicians and abortion.

The Democrats chided the pope for allegedly agreeing with Mexican bishops for invoking excommunication in dealing with Catholic lawmakers who voted to legalize abortion.

These Democrats are twice a disgrace. First, they have their facts wrong: no Mexican bishop ever invoked excommunication against any lawmaker for legalizing abortion. What happened was at first confusing, but was quickly clarified.

On May 9, speaking aboard a plane flying to Brazil, the pope initially gave the impression that he favored excommunication of the Mexican lawmakers. Later that same day his remarks were amended, making moot the idea that he favored such a penalty.

On May 10, the Vatican presented the pope's official statement. That statement did not speak to excommunicating anyone—it simply restated Church teaching that Catholic legislators who advocate legalized abortion should refrain from taking Communion. Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman on the scene, said that “if the bishops haven't excommunicated anyone, it's not that the pope wants to do so.”

The Catholic Democrats who signed the statement had plenty of time to get their facts straight. But in a defensive rush to judgment, they decided to take their game to the pope; thus did they disgrace themselves a second time.

“Advancing respect for life and for the dignity of every human being is, as our church has taught us, our own life's mission,” the Democrats said. It's not easy to reconcile that position with their voting record on abortion, which includes (in many instances) opposition to the partial-birth abortion

ban. Evidently, respecting the life and dignity of every human being doesn't extend to children who are 80 percent born.

These Catholic Democrats need to hire some fact checkers. And while they're at it, it might be good for them to hire a practicing Catholic bioethicist.