

DISHONESTY MARKS CATHOLIC SURVEY

On October 24, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) released the results of a survey of Catholic voters. William Donohue read the survey and wasted no time blasting CFFC. Here is the text of his remarks as released to the press:

“Belden Russonello & Stewart, hired by Catholics for a Free Choice to do its survey, is not a disinterested research firm: in 1999 it was described before a House subcommittee as a ‘Democratic’ firm. Now it is an axiom in sociology that virtually any result can be elicited in a survey if the questions are cooked to deliver, and that is exactly what happened here.

“For example, in her news release on the survey, Frances Kissling, president of CFFC, boasts that 66 percent of Catholics support legal abortion and 70 percent believe that Catholic bishops should not use the political arena to advance their moral opinions. But what she didn’t say undercuts the points she wants to make.

“The data of her own survey show that only 6 percent of Catholics agree with abortion law as it is accepted today. In other words, only 6 percent agree with the statement that abortion should be morally acceptable in all circumstances; fully 61 percent say that abortion should never be acceptable or should be acceptable only in rare circumstances. But no one would know this by reading Kissling’s selective look at the data.

“Similarly, questions like, ‘Do you think Catholic Bishops should use the political arena to advance their moral opinions?’, is loaded to elicit a predictable response. Now if it were asked, ‘Do Bishops have the same free speech rights as

everyone else to address moral issues?', the results would be markedly different.

"Kissling has said that her goal is to 'overthrow' the Catholic Church. Though she will fail, her motives color everything she does, including her dishonest summaries of her contrived surveys."

Kissling's effort to fool the public didn't work too well as her survey received very little attention from the press. She was probably surprised to learn that Donohue was one of the few who did cite her survey on TV. He cited the finding that only 6 percent of Catholics agree that abortion should be morally acceptable in all circumstances. Not exactly the kind of citation Kissling was expecting.