

OBAMA 'S SPEECH

“ANTI - CATHOLIC”



Bill Donohue comments on President Barack Obama's speech given in Ireland where he mentioned Catholic schools:

There are plenty of reasons to be critical of President Obama's policies as they relate to the Catholic Church, and I have not been shy in stating them. But the reaction on the part of conservatives, many of whom are Catholic, over his speech in Ireland, is simply insane. Never did Obama say he wants "an end to Catholic education." Indeed, he never said anything critical about the nature of Catholic schools. It makes me wonder: Have any of his critics bothered to actually read his speech?

Obama's speech, given in Northern Ireland, properly spoke of the divisions between Catholics and Protestants. He lauded the Good Friday Agreement, noting that "There are still wounds that haven't healed, and communities where tensions and mistrust hangs in the air." He said that "segregated schools and housing" add to the problem. Then he said, "If towns remain divided—if Catholics have their schools and buildings, and Protestants have theirs—if we can't see ourselves in one another, if fear or resentment are allowed to harden, that encourages division."

Obama was not condemning Catholic schools—he was condemning segregation. He was calling attention to the fact that where social divisions exist, the prospects for social harmony are dimmed. How can anyone reasonable disagree with this observation? Moreover, it should hardly be surprising that a

black president would be sensitive to segregation, whether based on race or religion.

Some are also condemning Obama for disrespecting a Vatican official who days earlier touted Catholic education before a Scottish audience. So what? Obama's speech, which no doubt was written before Archbishop Gerhard Müller spoke, mentioned Catholic schools in conjunction with Catholic buildings, the purpose of which was not to assess the worth of Catholic education (or Catholic buildings!), but to criticize religious divisions. In short, ripping comments out of context is an old game, and it is patently unfair to speakers and writers.