

# OBSESSING OVER BIDEN'S RELIGION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the intense focus on President Biden's religion:

The obsession with President Biden's religion is everywhere apparent, especially among Democrats, liberal pundits, reporters and activists. They are working overtime to convince the public that he is a good Catholic.

On Biden's first day in office, White House press secretary Jen Psaki addressed his religion at a press conference. "I will just take the opportunity to remind all of you that he is a devout Catholic, and somebody who attends church regularly." "Devout Catholic." A lexis-nexis search reveals that this descriptive term has been used by the press hundreds of times in the last three months.

The day after Biden was inaugurated, the New York Times gushed that he is "perhaps the most religiously observant commander in chief in half a century." Usually, this newspaper is apprehensive, if not alarmed, about "religiously observant" public officials (especially Catholic ones), yet for some reason they made an exception for Biden.

Sister Carol Keehan is the former head of the Catholic Health Association. She says Biden is a "man who clearly loves his faith." To get an idea of what she considers to be a model Catholic, she recently showered Xavier Becerra with praise when he was being grilled by a Senate committee over his nomination to be Secretary of Health and Human Services. It does not bother her one iota that Becerra supports partial-birth abortions and is known for his never-ending crusades against the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Another Biden admirer is John Carr, co-director of a Catholic

project at Georgetown University; he is a reliable liberal Catholic voice. He is impressed by the difference between Biden and his predecessor. "We're going from one of the least overtly religious presidents in modern times to one of the most overtly religious presidents in recent times."

If there is one thing that makes Biden "overtly religious," it is his habit of carrying a rosary. That puts a smile on the face of liberal Catholics like Father Tom Reese, a prominent Jesuit writer. "This is a guy who carries a rosary around in his pocket and talks about his faith." The media also love this story. This explains why there is so much chatter about Biden's rosary beads.

Let's concede that Biden is a rosary-carrying "devout Catholic." What does that have to do with his public policy decisions that are of interest to the Catholic Church?

Biden's lust for abortion rights, and his steadfast opposition to religious liberty legislation—as exemplified in his defense of the Equality Act—are uncontestable. In other words, if a "devout" Catholic doesn't connect the dots between his faith and his public policy decisions, how excited should Catholics be about him? And does this not explain why secularists adore this kind of Catholic?

At the individual level, Biden is the embodiment of what the privatization of religion means. In this view, religion is solely an interior exercise, having no public role to play. It must be said that there is nothing Catholic about such a position. Indeed, every pope in recent times, including Pope Francis, has spoken against this insular view. Catholicism, they contend, must have a robust presence in the public square.

Biden's privatized conception of religion is not a stunt—it is who he is. The first time he publicly mentioned his rosary beads was in 1995, twenty-two years after he became U.S.

Senator from Delaware. What he said at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on religious freedom was classic Biden.

“I am one of those guys who’s never talked about my religion. I carry a thing called a rosary bead with me all the time—I say it all the time, I say it on the train—to me, it’s a comforting thing. I don’t suggest it to anybody else.”

He did not explain why, if the rosary beads meant so much to him, he did not want to “suggest it to anybody else.” Perhaps in his mind such a suggestion could be read as an imposition. But that wouldn’t explain his support for forcing nuns to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plans. That was not a suggestion—it was a mandate. It was also one that violated Catholic moral teachings.

It seems a little strange for a “devout Catholic” to keep private his religion. After all, Biden is not a monk—he has been a public office holder for 47 years. This accounts, however, for the fact that when he was running for president, the majority of the public had no idea he was Catholic. In September 2020, Newsweek released a poll showing that 56% were unaware that Biden was Catholic.

Biden’s long-time secretive Catholic status is a secret no more. Indeed his fans are now touting his “devout Catholic” status whenever they can. Given the president’s strong opposition to the life issues and religious liberty, they have little choice. It is precisely this kind of Catholic that the New York Times loves.