

PELOSI & BIDEN ROIL USCCB; ABORTION ISSUE IGNITES

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and vice presidential candidate Joseph Biden recently misrepresented the Church's teaching on abortion, drawing fire from more than two dozen bishops. Their obstinacy in the face of criticism only emboldened more bishops to take issue with them.

Tom Brokaw asked Pelosi on "Meet the Press" to comment on when life begins. Here is what she said: "I would say as an ardent, practicing Catholic, this is an issue that I have studied for a long time. And what I know is, over the centuries, the doctors of the Church have not been able to make that definition."

A stunned Brokaw, who is not Catholic, told Pelosi that the Catholic Church "feels very strongly" that life begins at conception. Pelosi answered, "I understand. And this is like maybe 50 years or something like that. So again, over the history of the Church, this is an issue of controversy."

Pelosi's obtuse answer merited a gift from the Catholic League. We tried to educate the House Speaker by sending her a copy of *Catholicism for Dummies* (by the way, it is an excellent book, written by two great priests, Rev. John Trigilio and Rev. Kenneth Brighenti—both are friends of Bill Donohue). Her response also triggered news releases from two sources: Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput and the Catholic League. Plenty more bishops, priests and lay persons quickly followed.

Pelosi dug herself in deeper a few days later when her office issued a statement acknowledging that while the Church is against abortion, St. Augustine said that ensoulment doesn't occur until 46 days after conception (she failed to mention

that St. Augustine was opposed to abortion). The controversy continued right up to the point where her bishop, San Francisco Archbishop George H. Niederauer, requested a meeting with her.

A few weeks later, Biden appeared on "Meet the Press" announcing that abortion was a religious issue that was looked upon differently by different religions. He said that while he accepts the Church's teaching on when life begins, he did not want to impose it on others. Complicating matters, he said that St. Thomas Aquinas did not believe that life began "until quickening, 40 days after conception." He, too, failed to note that Aquinas was opposed to abortion. Many bishops, and the Catholic League, jumped on his remarks as misleading and counterproductive.

What Pelosi and Biden have done is reprehensible.