

POPE'S OBLIQUE SHOT AT OBAMA

Recently, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the U.S. bishops at their "Ad Limina" visit. During his address, the pope took a veiled shot at the Obama administration.

Without explicitly naming Obama, Pope Benedict XVI made it clear that he sees the administration as a threat to religious liberty. He spoke eloquently of the role of religious freedom in American history and the importance of natural law. He also said, "The legitimate separation of Church and State cannot be taken to mean that the Church must be silent on certain issues," calling attention to the "grave threats to the Church's public moral witness presented by a radical secularism which finds increasing expression in the political and cultural spheres."

How do we know that he was addressing the Obama administration? Speaking of his discussions with U.S. bishops, the Holy Father said: "Many of you have pointed out that concerted efforts have been made to deny the right of conscientious objection on the part of Catholic individuals and institutions with regard to cooperation in intrinsically evil practices. Others have spoken to me of a worrying tendency to reduce religious freedom to mere freedom of worship without guarantees of respect for freedom of conscience."

The pope was referring to the public pronouncements of those who objected to the Obamacare mandate that Catholic institutions provide sterilization and contraceptive services (including abortifacients), and the denial of funding to a Catholic agency that combats human trafficking because the Church opposes abortion.

The term "freedom of worship," was coined to distinguish it from "freedom of religion." It expresses a highly privatized

understanding of religious liberty that does not embrace the public expression of religion. It is also the preferred term of our nation's president and secretary of state.