

# ROBERTS, CATHOLICISM AND ABORTION

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following comments today on Supreme Court nominee John Roberts:

“In an AP poll just released, 52 percent of Americans said that Judge Roberts should give his position on abortion when asked by lawmakers. Whether he does or not is of little interest to the Catholic League, though it is important to recall that Ruth Bader Ginsburg positively refused to answer questions on gay rights and capital punishment, and she did so with impunity. What is of interest to us is the way some are trying to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between Judge Roberts’ Catholicity and his presumed position on abortion. Indeed, even his wife, who is avowedly pro-life, has been dragged into this debate.

“Let’s begin with the AP. In the story on the survey, it says, ‘While deputy solicitor general in 1990, Roberts, a Roman Catholic, helped write a legal brief’ that *Roe v. Wade* overturned. Now there is nothing in the AP style-book that merits mentioning Roberts’ religion in this context. For example, in today’s *New York Times*, it several times mentions that Roberts is a Catholic, but its use is entirely descriptive and biographical: it was not cited to imply a causal relationship with his presumed position on abortion. That’s not a small difference. To the unconvinced, imagine reading, ‘Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a Jew, helped write a legal brief’ for the ACLU upholding *Roe*? And keep in mind that every survey has disclosed that Jews are more uniformly in favor of abortion rights than Catholics are pro-life.

“AP is not alone. Yesterday, NPR’s Lynn Neary said of Roberts, ‘And he is a Roman Catholic, and that might affect

the way he views an issue like abortion, for instance.' American University law professor Stephen Wermiel went one better, asserting, 'It could make a difference. It could also make a difference in church-state separation issues.'

"These are more than red flags—these are the marks of bigotry, politely expressed. And these people consider themselves to be tolerant."