

SEN. DURBIN'S CATHOLIC AWARD SETS OFF ALARMS

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Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Illinois), who identifies as Catholic, has been named by the Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Blase Cupich, the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at the "Keep Hope Alive" Benefit on November 3. It has already set off the alarms among the clergy and the laity.

Leading the criticism is another Illinois bishop, Thomas Paprocki, Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield. "Senator Durbin, who has been banned from receiving Holy Communion in the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois since 2004 for his public support for abortion, should not be celebrated by the Church."

Durbin supports partial-birth abortion, the procedure where the skull of a child who is 80 percent born is crushed so as to allow him to pass through the birth canal. He also believes that a child born alive as a result of a botched abortion does not need to be attended to by medical personnel, letting him die on the physician's table. Similarly, he holds that even though an unborn child can feel pain—and indeed can even survive—at 20 weeks gestation, he does not want to ban these abortions.

Supporting Bishop Paprocki's position is San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone. He posted on X a statement of "solidarity" with him.

The Catholic League has often tangled with Sen. Durbin.

It seems every time Durbin takes a position against religious liberty, he walks it back, only to walk it back again.

On July 27, 2005, I issued a news release noting how Durbin

told a CNN correspondent that he “needs to look at everything, including the nominee’s faith.” He was referring to the Catholic faith of Supreme Court nominee John Roberts, something he pledged to probe during the hearings.

This was a departure from what Durbin said on April 15, 2005, when he was asked about the religious beliefs of a nominee to the federal bench. “By the Constitution and by law, we cannot even ask that question, nor would I.”

Yet on June 11, 2003, Durbin took umbrage at Circuit Court nominee William Pryor when Pryor merely noted the historical relationship between Christianity and the nation’s founding: “Do you understand,” Durbin said, that this “raises concerns of those who don’t happen to be Christian that you are asserting an agenda of your own, religious belief of your own inconsistent with separation of church and state?”

After taking flack for that remark, Durbin said on July 23, 2003 that members of the Senate Judiciary Committee ought “to expunge references to religion from this point forward.” He added, hypocritically, “This is beneath the dignity of the committee.”

The very next day, July 24, he reversed himself, saying, “If Senator [Jeff] Sessions is suggesting that anyone who has a religious belief should never be questioned about it, even if it has political implications, I just think [that] is wrong-headed.”

On July 31, he reversed himself again, this time having the audacity to co-sponsor a resolution saying, “It shall not be in order to ask any question of the nominee relating to the religious affiliation of the nominee.”

The man’s duplicity is astounding.

On September 7, 2017 I wrote to Durbin about the suitability of Notre Dame Law School professor Amy Coney Barrett to sit on

the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals. I asked why he continued to probe her about her “orthodox Catholic” views when she made it clear that it is *never* appropriate to impose one’s religious convictions on cases before the bench. I had to ask, “Do you similarly probe prospective federal judges who are not Catholic about the orthodoxy of their religious beliefs?”

I addressed Durbin again on November 11, 2021, after he complained about being singled out by Bishop Paprocki by refusing to give him Holy Communion (because of his pro-abortion votes). He was right to note that he was being singled out, but what he failed to say is that he had previously been told not to go to Communion by then Monsignor Kevin Vann (now bishop of Orange, CA) of Blessed Sacrament Church in Springfield. In other words, Durbin was making up his own rules again.

On the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops there is a document, “Catholics in Public Life.” It says, “It is the teaching of the Catholic Church from the very beginning, founded on her understanding of her Lord’s own witness to the sacredness of human life, that the killing of an unborn child is always intrinsically evil and can never be justified.”

It also says, “The Catholic community and Catholic institutions should **not honor** those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles. They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions.” (Emphasis in the original.)

No wonder the alarms are going off.