

KERRY DEFIANTLY REJECTS CHURCH TEACHINGS

As reported in today's *New York Times*, Senator John Kerry got defiant yesterday when told that some are unhappy with the way his voting record departs from Church teachings. Kerry wanted to know who they are, challenging reporters to "name them." He pointedly asked, "Are they the same legislators who vote for the death penalty, which is in contravention of Catholic teaching?" Kerry also said, "My oath privately between me and God was defined in the Catholic church by Pius XXIII and Pope Paul VI in the Vatican II, which allows for freedom of conscience for Catholics with respect to these choices, and that is exactly where I am."

Catholic League president William Donohue had this to say:

"When Senator John Kerry is asked why he disagrees with the Catholic Church on such important life issues as abortion (including partial-birth abortion, parental consent, federal funding and the rights of unborn victims of violence), doctor-assisted suicide and stem cell research, he responds by saying it is a matter of conscience. But when it comes to those Catholic legislators who disagree with the Catholic Church on capital punishment, the issue of freedom of conscience quickly becomes moot. In fact, Kerry dogmatically condemns such lawmakers.

"Last September, the U.S. bishops released a statement, 'Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility.' In it, they said that abortion 'is never morally acceptable.' On November 21, 2002, Pope John Paul II approved a doctrinal note on 'The Participation of Catholics in Political Life' that was written by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. It said that 'lawmaking bodies have

a *grave and clear obligation to oppose* any law that attacks human life' (emphasis in the original). Regarding conscience, it stressed that 'it must be noted that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals.'

"Kerry needs to educate himself about the teachings of the Church. He also needs a history lesson: there never was a Pope Pius XXIII."

ROLE OF RELIGION PLAGUES KERRY

According to today's *Washington Post*, Senator John Kerry attended services yesterday at Charles Street AME Church in Boston's Roxbury district (inexplicably, he also took communion at the Protestant church). From the pulpit, Rev. Gregory G. Groover introduced Kerry as "the next president of the United States." And from today's *Washington Times*, we learn that Kerry continues to duck questions regarding his standing in the Catholic Church.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"It is illegal for a member of the clergy to endorse a candidate for public office from the pulpit. But this matters not a whit to Rev. Groover or to candidate Kerry. Nor does it seem to matter to most members of the media. But if President Bush were to be endorsed by a Roman Catholic priest—the way Kerry was endorsed yesterday by a minister—all those who are

currently silent would explode in anger. Indeed, the IRS would be on the case in a New York minute.

“The IRS has a *Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations* that spells out, in great detail, what is permissible and what is not. It says that religious leaders are free to speak about any political matter ‘as *individuals*’ (its emphasis). But the IRS also says that ‘religious leaders cannot make partisan comments in official organization publications *or at official church functions*’ (my emphasis). Being introduced from the pulpit as ‘the next president of the United States’ is therefore a clear violation of the law.

“Kerry’s biggest problem when it comes to religion, however, has nothing to do with campaigning in churches. It has to do with his steadfast refusal to answer questions regarding the annulment he sought of his first marriage. To wit: Was it ever obtained? We know he married Teresa Heinz in a civil ceremony in 1995—fully two years *before* he sought an annulment of his first marriage. But Kerry won’t answer questions whether the annulment was granted, or whether he and his current wife are married in the Catholic Church.”

MEDIA INTEREST IN KERRY’S CATHOLICISM GROWS

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“The Catholic League does not possess a theological micrometer that judges, with digital precision, how ‘good’ a Catholic is. Furthermore, it is not our business anyway. But it is also true that we will not pretend disinterest in subjects

that touch on the issue of Catholics in public life.

"This week's issue of *Time* magazine says Senator John Kerry 'sought an annulment of his 18-year first marriage before marrying again.' News reports indicate, however, that Kerry didn't seek an annulment until after he married Teresa Heinz in a civil ceremony in 1995. Today's *New York Times* says Kerry 'sought an annulment from the church when he was divorced from his first wife.' Notice that neither *Time* nor the *New York Times* says that an annulment was granted. They say it was 'sought.'

"Kerry cannot claim that this is a private matter since he publicly joked about his quest for an annulment on the Don Imus show of May 8, 1997. 'Seventy-five percent of all annulments in the world take place in the United States,' Kerry said, 'and I guess the figure drops to 50 percent if you take out all Massachusetts politicians.' He continued saying, 'It's one of those special Catholic things. It's like confession or feeling guilty about things you haven't even thought of doing.'

"On February 16, 2004, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported that 'Kerry's office didn't respond to several e-mail and telephone requests' regarding the question of whether an annulment was granted. On March 23, 2003, the *Providence Journal-Bulletin* said that Kerry 'will not say whether he obtained an annulment of his first marriage....' Why the reticence, especially since Kerry says his 'current marriage is in good graces with the church?'

"Why does this matter? If Kerry did not receive an annulment, then he is not married in the Catholic Church and cannot receive the sacraments. But even if he was annulled, did he and Teresa Heinz get married in the Catholic Church following the annulment? If not, then Kerry is not married in the Church, thus raising all sorts of questions."