

BIDEN'S WEARY CATHOLICISM



Bill Donohue comments on Vice President Joe Biden's remarks on Catholicism that were given at the end of yesterday's debate:

Vice President Joe Biden has been instructed by bishops not to present himself for Communion; he has been the subject of many reprimands; and he has been banned from speaking at Catholic institutions. Most of these sanctions are a function of his pro-abortion views.

Last night, Biden added to his problems by saying he agrees that life begins at conception, but he doesn't want to do anything to ensure the rights of the unborn child. The Catholic Church is opposed to animal cruelty as well, yet it is a sure bet that Biden has no problem with laws that punish dog fighting. Maybe if he began to think of little Joe in his mother's womb the way he thinks of Fido, more kids would live.

Just as obnoxious was Biden's claim that the Obama administration is not interfering with the religious liberties of Catholic non-profits. Is he unaware of the dozens of lawsuits filed by the bishops, the laity, and Catholic institutions seeking to insulate themselves from the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate? Of course not.

The vice president really outdid himself when he *twice* said it is "a fact" that there is nothing for Catholics to worry about. Here's a real fact: Biden initially registered his misgivings about the policy, and even went so far as to warn that the HHS mandate would not sit well with Catholics. So what changed your mind, Joe?

Listening to Biden discuss his Catholicism is getting weary.

AL SMITH DINNER SPARKS DEBATE



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the debate over this year's Al Smith Dinner:

It is customary, though not compulsory, for the New York Archbishop to invite the presidential candidates from the two major political parties to the annual Al Smith Dinner in New York City. This year both candidates will be there. Some are not happy with these choices, especially the decision to invite President Obama. Cardinal Timothy Dolan has not been shy about his criticisms of the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate, yet he decided to rise above the politics of the moment and allow the presidential candidates to partake in this charitable event.

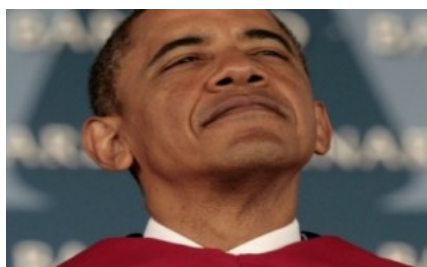
On the August 9 edition of "Lou Dobbs Tonight" (Fox Business Channel), I vigorously defended Cardinal Dolan's decision. I talked with him earlier that day about this issue and found, unsurprisingly, that the New York Archbishop wasn't budging in his conviction that the HHS mandate must be fought with every tool we have. His resolve is unflinching. For me, that was the bottom line. But not for others.

If Catholics want to change the culture, they need to engage it. Practically speaking, this means that we invite local political figures to Midnight Mass at Christmas, regardless of their religion or politics; it means we break bread with our adversaries at commemorative events; it means we fraternize with those with whom we disagree with at city, state and federal functions. It does not mean that we are selling out.

Acting diplomatically may at times make for a hard swallow. But following protocol is not analogous to prostituting one's principles. As anyone who read Cardinal Dolan's statement from yesterday knows, he is not caving in; indeed he is incapable of doing so.

Finally, though I am not going to the dinner (I have never been to any of these dinners), my defense of the New York Archbishop has led to a barrage of vile comments directed at me. So be it. But Cardinal Dolan deserves better.

OBAMA SPINS CATHOLIC DIALOGUE



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks made yesterday in Denver by President Barack Obama:

Before a crowd at the University of Denver, President Obama addressed the Health and Human Services mandate that orders Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, contraception and sterilization. "We worked with the Catholic hospitals and universities to find a solution that protects both religious liberty and a woman's health," he said. The president also said that Mitt Romney "joined the far right of his party to support a bill that would allow any employer to deny contraceptive coverage to their employees."

Regarding the first remark, Obama is singularly dishonest. On February 8, Bishop William Lori, who chairs the bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty, said point blank that "no one from this administration has approached the United States

Catholic Conference of Bishops for discussions on this matter of a possible ‘compromise.’” Is it the position of President Obama that Bishop Lori [now the Archbishop of Baltimore] was lying? Furthermore, on February 13, Bishop Lori made it clear that only *after* the original HHS mandate of January 20 was revised and ready to be announced on February 10 did the White House contact Archbishop Timothy Dolan, head of the bishops’ conference.

Regarding the other remark, Obama was referencing the Blunt Amendment; it secured conscience exemptions for health care providers. Not only was this bill not a product of the “far right,” it lost by only three votes in the U.S. Senate, with three Democrats joining with the Republicans; one of those Democrats was Senator Bob Casey, hardly a “far right” zealot. More important, a *New York Times* poll of March 13 showed that 57 percent of Americans believe that religiously affiliated employers should be able to opt out of the HHS mandate. Are most Americans part of the “far right,” President Obama?

Demagoguery will not make Obama’s “war on religion” disappear. Only respecting the conscience rights of Catholics will do that.

OBAMACARE RULING AND CATHOLIC RIGHTS



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding ObamaCare:

The only way Catholic non-profits could have survived the encroachment of the federal government on their right not to buy insurance for services they deem immoral was if the entire ObamaCare legislation had been struck down. That did not happen.

The Supreme Court did not rule today on the constitutionality of the right of the Obama administration to force Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, contraception, and sterilization in their insurance plans; this Health and Human Services (HHS) edict was issued after the high court accepted the ObamaCare bill. Eventually, this particular issue will reach the Supreme Court.

If the Supreme Court decision lacks clarity, the Catholic response will be anything but ambiguous: the battle lines between the bishops and the Obama administration are now brighter than ever. Fortunately, not only do practicing Catholics overwhelmingly support the bishops, tens of millions of non-Catholics also do.

ObamaCare may have survived, but it is by no means a lock that the HHS mandate will. It is one thing to levy a tax, quite another to level the First Amendment.

RABBI WASKOW'S CATHOLIC PROBLEM



Bill Donohue responds to news stories about a private e-mail exchange [click [here](#)] he had with Rabbi Arthur Waskow that has now been leaked to the press:

It's time to set the record straight about a feud between Rabbi Waskow and me. I wrote to Waskow following his screed condemning the bishops for standing up for the First Amendment rights of Catholics [click [here](#)]. Not content to act civilly, he says of the bishops, "For these men, 'religion' happens only in the genitals." In the same article, Waskow cites "Vatican arrogance" for its inquiry into an internal Church matter, i.e., legitimate concerns over a minority of nuns who have gone "beyond Jesus."

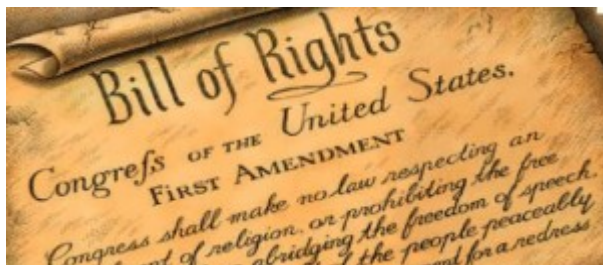
My comment about Ed Koch saying Jews should not make enemies with their Catholic friends was a summation of Mayor Koch's statement made in January before a Jewish audience [click [here](#)]: "We're 13 million Jews in the whole world—less than one-tenth of 1 percent. And we need allies. The best ally we can have is the Catholic Church." On January 30, I publicly commended him for his remark [click [here](#)], adding, "The Catholic League is proud to stand with the Jewish community in this time of unrelenting attacks on both Catholics and Jews." I also said that Ed Koch was "one of the greatest friends that Catholics have ever had."

It is not just this one article by Waskow that is upsetting to the Catholic community. In February [click [here](#)], he said that the bishops' opposition to the Obama administration's HHS mandate seeking to force Catholic entities to pay for

abortion-inducing drugs in their health plans was “an outrageous attempt to impose sharia law on the U.S. government and the American public.” Sharia law? So when the bishops defend constitutional rights they are, in effect, seeking to impose totalitarianism! Waskow has also said of Pope Benedict XVI [click [here](#)], “He was a villain before he became Pope, and he is a villain still.”

It should be obvious that Rabbi Waskow has a Catholic problem.

“IT’S THE FIRST AMENDMENT, STUPID”



Bill Donohue addresses an editorial in the *New York Times*, and a column by Lisa Miller in the *Washington Post*, that appeared on Sunday:

The central issue in the fight between the Obama administration and the Catholic Church is the right of the federal government to redefine religious institutions as entities that hire and serve mostly people of their own faith. Secondly, the fight is over forcing Catholics to pay for abortion-inducing drugs. But one looks in vain for the Church’s critics to even acknowledge this reality. It’s not contraception that is in play—“It’s the First Amendment, Stupid.”

The *Times* says the Obama mandate “specifically exempts houses of worship.” Try telling that to Donald Cardinal Wuerl who runs the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.; it is a self-insured

entity and thus must be forced to pay for morally objectionable services. The *Times* says most American Catholic women do not agree with the Church's contraception stand, but fails to mention that *because of the Obama administration's disrespect for religious liberty*, support for Obama has dropped precipitously among Catholic women.

Lisa Miller argues that a "small group of very conservative bishops have hijacked the church," and cites Stockton Bishop Stephen Blaire as taking the other side. She is wrong. Three days before Miller's piece ran, Blaire issued a statement saying, "I stand solidly with my brother bishops in our common resolve to overturn the unacceptable intrusion of government into the life of the Church by the HHS Mandate."

Here's what is really driving this story. The secular critics of the Catholic Church, beginning with HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, are so out of touch with Catholic sentiment today that they seriously misread the reaction to this issue. Moreover, they thoroughly underestimated the resolve of today's crop of Catholic bishops. Now they are trying to deflect what is really happening, but it's too late.

OBAMACARE vs. CATHOLIC CHURCH



Bill Donohue comments on the latest confrontation between the Catholic Church and the Obama administration:

Two developments in the last 24 hours offer new evidence that the confrontation between the Catholic Church and the Obama administration is reaching collision course dimensions: yesterday, attorneys for the United States Conference of

Catholic Bishops (USCCB) made plain their objections to the alleged “accommodations” offered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); and today the Franciscan University of Steubenville announced that as a result of the HHS mandate it would drop student health care insurance programs starting in the next academic year.

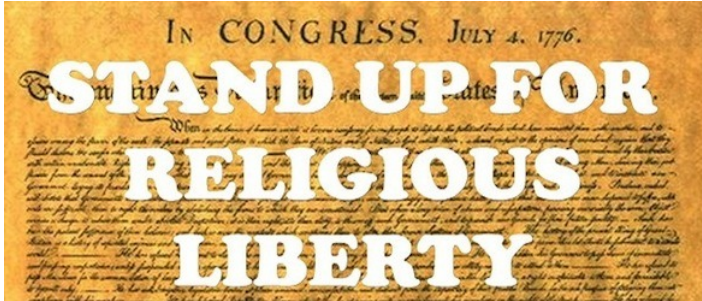
Writing for the bishops, Anthony R. Picarello, Jr. and Michael F. Moses listed six objections to the HHS mandate that would force Catholic non-profits to pay for morally objectionable services in their insurance plans. One central objection was the “unprecedented” attempt to redefine religious employers as entities that hire and serve mostly people of their own religion; it would effectively nullify the religious exemption traditionally afforded such institutions as Catholic social service agencies, hospitals and colleges.

Another major point, one which speaks directly to the concerns of Franciscan University, is that it mandates such organizations to “either drop out of the health insurance marketplace” or “provide coverage that violates their deeply-held convictions.” Fr. Terence Henry, the courageous president of the university, will not be bullied.

Both the crabbed redefinition of a religious institution, and the either/or conditions it offers Catholic non-profits, are classic Catch-22 politics. The goal, which is to punish Catholic organizations if they don’t bow to the secular edicts of the Obama administration, couldn’t be more transparent.

The war on religion continues. Anyone who thought it was fading away needs a reality check. We stand with the USCCB.

BISHOPS DON'T BUDGE ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the statement [click [here](#)] just released by the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

The statement, “United for Religious Freedom,” is the clearest exposition of contemporary Catholic thought on religious liberty in America. It leaves nothing on the table.

It speaks directly to the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate that seeks to force Catholic non-profits to cover services it deems objectionable in its insurance plans. Mincing no words, the statement declares the HHS edict to be “unjust and illegal.”

It debunks many myths about this issue: it is not about contraception; it is not just about Catholic religious rights; it is not about the Catholic Church trying to impose its will on others—it is about the federal government trying to impose its agenda on us; it is not about opposition to universal health care (the Church has long championed this right); and it is not about choosing political sides. It is about religious liberty.

Most important, the statement argues that the HHS mandate seeks to create a three-tiered class of citizens’ rights: by defining religious rights as applying only to those who work for religious institutions that hire and serve mostly people of their own faith, the Obama administration has relegated those who work in religious institutions that serve everyone

to a second-class status; those who are not a religious employer but nonetheless reject on religious grounds to funding immoral insurance plans constitute a third-class of citizens.

The good news is that the bishops aren't flinching: there is no room for compromise when the subject is our constitutional rights—rights that come from God, as the Declaration affirmed, not government. It warms the heart to read that the “unprecedented magnitude of this latest threat has only strengthened our resolve” to do what is right. The bishops have the unqualified support of the Catholic League.

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS REJECTED



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on today's Senate vote to table the “Respect for Rights of Conscience Act”:

The 51-48 vote to table an amendment by Sen. Roy Blunt that would guarantee rights of conscience for the employees of religious institutions does not end the debate.

There is a bill sponsored by Rep. Jeff Fortenberry that would also secure conscience rights for people of faith, and it has already garnered a near-majority of House members. Also available as a possible remedy are the rights encoded in the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. And, of course, the U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments on the ObamaCare legislation later this month; a decision is expected in late

spring.

The Obama administration has chosen to shut out the Catholic voice (save for the dissidents). Consider the following:

- Archbishop William Lori has said that there was no discussion between administration officials and the bishops prior to the decisions of January 20 and February 10 that effectively mandated Catholic institutions to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, contraception and sterilization.
- Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Kathleen Sebelius has admitted under questioning that the Justice Department was never asked to consider the religious-rights implications of her draconian directive.
- Dr. Linda Rosenstock, who served on a committee of the Institute of Medicine that was empowered to study the HHS mandate, said on Tuesday that at no time did anyone on the committee ever weigh the issue of religious rights.

Obama does not want to dialogue—he wants to dictate. Game on.