

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AFFIRMED; EXECUTIVE ORDER ISSUED

On May 4th, President Trump signed an executive order affirming his support for religious liberty.

He is to be commended for this initiative, even though the statement lacked the kind of teeth that we expected; the leaked draft that became available in February offered greater detail. Bill Donohue was invited to the White House but a scheduling snafu prevented him from going.

The most specific part of the executive order deals with the Johnson Amendment. This provision allows the IRS to challenge the tax-exempt status of churches and religious non-profit organizations if they endorse candidates for public office, or become directly involved in the political process.

It is up to the Congress to overturn the Johnson Amendment, though what Trump did is hardly meaningless. His initiative makes it clear that his Cabinet will not enforce this IRS code, thus vitiating its essence.

We hasten to add that there is an underside to the repeal of the Johnson Amendment. Many of the faithful do not want to turn their churches into a venue for political theater, nor does the Catholic League want to be lobbied by Republicans and Democrats to get on board. Church should be about worship, not politics.

On the issues most important to Catholics—ensuring conscience rights, and allowing Catholic non-profit organizations to exercise their doctrinal prerogatives with impunity—the executive order did not offer specifics, though the president did instruct his Cabinet to ensure that religious liberty will be protected.

So while in comparison to the leaked draft version, the final executive order was watered down, it nevertheless sent the right signal to executive agencies: religious liberty must be given a priority status when implementing legislation.

We certainly expect that the Trump administration will ensure that Catholic non-profits, such as the Little Sisters of the Poor, will finally be free of the pernicious pressures brought to bear on them by attorneys out to sunder their mission. The nuns should not have to comply with any mandate that forces them to be complicit in immoral acts.

At the heart of this controversy is something that transcends an executive order. To be exact, no government agency should have the right to strip Catholic organizations of their religious exemption merely because they hire and serve large segments of the population that are not Catholic.

Much more is needed to guarantee religious liberty: the Congress must act, and the federal courts must uphold the First Amendment rights of religious individuals and entities. But we can at least thank President Trump for pointing these branches of government in the right direction.

KATE O'BEIRNE R.I.P.

The Catholic community lost a champion with the passing of Kate O'Beirne; she died April 23rd. She was a smart, courageous pundit and policy analyst who never ducked an opponent.

Kate was featured on the CNN talk show, "The Capital Gang," for many years. She was polite yet firm: she knew her stuff and delivered her message with alacrity. Pity those who sought

to upend her. She was just as devastating with her pen: she wrote for Bill Buckley's *National Review*, and later worked in an administrative capacity for the magazine.

Bill Donohue first met Kate in the late 1980s when he was a Bradley Resident Scholar at The Heritage Foundation; Kate was a vice president there. He recalls her ability to master public policy issues—on a range of subjects—always knowing how to cut to the quick. But it was her amiable personality that won everyone over.

Kate had a great sense of humor, and while she could be tough, she was never mean. That is why even those who didn't agree with her came to admire her.

Shortly after Donohue became president of the Catholic League, Kate joined the league's board of directors; she would later switch to our advisory board. She was outspoken in her denunciation of Catholic bashing, and was equally vocal in her support for the rights of the unborn.

We need more outspoken women like Kate O'Beirne in the Catholic Church. She will be sorely missed.

MAINSTREAMING MEANNESS

William A. Donohue

Tony Alamo died on May 2nd. Stephen Colbert made headline news on May 3rd. Bill Maher made headline news on May 5th. Dan Savage was back in the news at the same time. All of these men were cited in news stories because of their despicable behavior. And all of them were cheered on save for Alamo, even though he did the least damage to our culture. Let me explain.

After Alamo died, I wrote that he was “a pedophile, a child porn king, a pathological liar, a tyrant, an abusive misogynist, a tax cheat, and a rabid anti-Catholic.” He died in a federal prison after being convicted on several felony charges.

What Alamo did to those whom he interacted with—having sex with little girls—is something that everyone can condemn, but it was his anti-Catholicism that brought him to the attention of the Catholic League long ago. Fortunately, his influence on the culture was marginal—he appealed to the uneducated. Alamo was a subcultural villain, not a player with wide reach.

Colbert, Maher, and Savage are different: They share Alamo’s meanness, but they have an impact on the dominant culture that Alamo only dreamed of. Worse, they have legions of fans who justify their offensiveness.

Colbert engaged in a rant against President Trump that was so obscene that it triggered an FCC investigation. I will not repeat what he said, only to note that it was a sick oral sex remark that he made about the president.

Two days later, Maher lashed out at the president and his daughter, Ivanka, laughing aloud about them having sex together. His show is pay-for-view, not subject to FCC oversight.

The buzz out of Hollywood in early May was the expected cancellation of the ABC show, “The Real O’Neals.” The show is based on the life of one of its producers, Dan Savage. When he is not writing about deviant sex acts, he is bashing the Catholic Church.

It is a testimony to the moral corruption of our society that we treat the likes of Colbert, Maher, and Savage in a better way than we treat the likes of Alamo. Tony Alamo was a disturbed individual, as well as a hater, but he did far less damage to our culture than any of the three celebrities. Their

unrepentance also stands out.

After Colbert made his foul comment about the president, he refused to apologize, though he did bow to homosexuals: His joke was seen as homophobic, and that is a taboo among the cultural elites. He reached out to homosexuals saying that “for the record, life is short, and anyone who expresses their love in their own way, is to me an American hero.”

Leaving aside the perversity of emulating two men for engaging in sodomy, it is striking to note that Colbert was concerned about offending those who were not the centerpiece of his obscenity, but not his real target, the president of the United States.

Some news stories said that Maher’s incestuous “joke” about the president and his daughter angered some of Trump’s fans. Just them? If someone made the same “joke” about President Obama and one of his daughters—no one would—it is a sure bet that most of Obama’s detractors would also be offended. So what is wrong with the maniacs who hate Trump so much that they are not offended by Maher’s vile remarks?

No network would ever air a show based on the life of a racist or an anti-Semite, but NBC gave Savage a stage to produce “The Real O’Neals.” He has said things that are so disgusting about Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI that no newspaper would print it. In fact, the *New York Times* would not even allow me to use an asterisk in the place of letters when I sought to publish an ad quoting what Savage has said.

We all know the difference between someone who jokes around with us—he may tell a joke that stereotypes our religion or ethnicity—and someone who is mean. The latter intends to hurt; the former does not. What Colbert and Maher said was intended to hurt. Ditto for what Savage has done. That they hurt others while smiling and laughing does not lessen their offense: it only masks it.

Those who make these “jokes,” and those who think they’re cute, are two of the problems. The third is those who pay them: corporate America. Savage’s show was aired by ABC, which is owned by the “Snow White” folks at Disney. Colbert works for CBS, which is owned by the CBS Corporation, a Goliath that owns and operates dozens of other stations. Maher airs on HBO, which is owned by mega-giant Time Warner.

Colbert, Maher, and Savage may think they have nothing in common with the likes of Alamo, but to any cultural observer not enamored of celebrities, they are simply a better educated version. They have mainstreamed meanness, an achievement deserving of our contempt, not our applause.

NEW EVIDENCE VALIDATES STEPINAC

Ronald J. Rychlak

Robin Harris, *Stepinac: His Life and Times* (Gracewing Publishing, 2016)

Those who study churchmen of the WWII era know that Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac, Archbishop of Zagreb during WWII, is controversial. Following the war, communist authorities charged and convicted him of collaboration with the Nazi-like Ustashe party. Those false charges have followed Stepinac, even after many of the authorities who took part in framing him came forth and admitted their misdeeds. *Stepinac: His Life and Times*, by British historian Robin Harris, is the first all-encompassing biography of Stepinac, and it should put to rest all of the questions about him that have been debated ever since the close of the Second World War.

Harris draws on the latest and best archival evidence, including previously unexplored Secret Police files stored in the Croatian State Archives, to give the reader a close look at Stepinac's entire life. In so doing, he presents the clearest and best look available in the English language at this man who remains an icon across Croatia.

Stepinac rose to positions of authority in the Church at a young age. In 1934, Pope Pius XI nominated him to be coadjutor archbishop of Zagreb. At 36, he was the youngest bishop in the world. In 1937, though still below the prescribed canonical age of 40, Stepinac succeeded Anton Bauer as the archbishop of Zagreb, becoming one of the youngest archbishops in the Church's history.

Archbishop Stepinac was extraordinarily active. He founded more than a dozen new parishes, established a committee for sacred art, helped found the first cloistered Carmelite monastery in Croatia, participated in numerous national and international Eucharistic Congresses, visited the Holy Land, began work on a complete translation of the Bible, and helped to establish a Catholic daily newspaper. He also opened a diocesan museum and directed the preparations for a celebration of the 1,300th anniversary of the first ties between Croatia and the Holy See. It was a time of dynamic growth for the Catholic Church in Croatia (which was then part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, also sometimes called the first Yugoslavia). Unfortunately, it all came to an end with the outbreak of war.

Two years after Stepinac was consecrated archbishop of Zagreb, Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. Within two more years, a Nazi-puppet regime took over in Croatia. Ante Pavelic and his Ustashi government unleashed a wave of brutality against Serbian Orthodox and others. They were very vicious, worse even than the Nazis in their persecution of those who got in their way. Pavelic called himself a Catholic, and the Ustashe forcibly converted many people to Catholicism, even

over the objection of Archbishop Stepinac.

Stepinac initially cooperated with the Ustashe government, but he soon saw through the fog. The very same month that the Ustashi came into power (April 1941), they enacted Nuremberg-like racial laws. Stepinac not only condemned the laws from his cathedral, he wrote a letter of protest to the new government. Moreover, the letter makes clear that he had *previously* contacted the authorities with reference to the Jews and Serbs – immediately after the first measures against them had been taken.

In one typical homily from 1943, Stepinac condemned notions of racial superiority. “The Catholic Church knows nothing of races born to rule and born to slavery,” he said. “The Catholic Church knows races and nations only as creatures of God.” His sermons were so strong that the Ustashe prohibited them from being published, but his words were secretly printed, circulated, and occasionally broadcast over the radio. The files of the German police attaché in Zagreb show that Stepinac was often identified as a traitor by the Nazis and the Ustashi.

In 1941, Stepinac severely condemned the Ustashe’s destruction of Zagreb’s main synagogue: “A House of God, of whatever religion, is a holy place,” he said. “An attack on a House of God of any religion constitutes an attack on all religious communities.” There is even a story about a Nazi officer who came to Zagreb and heard Stepinac speak. The archbishop condemned the Ustashe’s actions so strongly that the general said “If a churchman in Germany spoke like that, he would not step down from the pulpit alive.”

In 1944-45, Communist partisans under Marshal Josip Broz—better known as Tito—conquered the Balkans and occupied Zagreb. Soon, a communist regime, the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia, had control of the nation. More than 150,000 Croats were killed—most of them war prisoners who died

during a long march from the Slovenian border to Macedonia that became known as "the way of the Cross." The new government also undertook persecution of the Catholic Church, confiscating property, closing seminaries and schools, banning Masses, and persecuting clergy.

Before coming to power, the Communists used Cardinal Stepinac's speeches in their propaganda, siding with him, as he always spoke against the violation of human rights by the Ustache. In fact, pictures were published in the Yugoslav press of three Orthodox bishops, Archbishop Stepinac, his auxiliary bishop Josip Lach, the Soviet Military Attaches, and the Croatian Communist leaders. They were even scheduled to be honored at a Zagreb parade to celebrate the establishment of a "Peoples Government." Soon, however, any hope for a working relationship fell apart.

Stepinac refused to be silent, and he became a threat. Several times, he was assaulted while he was trying to carry out his pastoral tasks. Finally, on May 17, 1945, Tito had him arrested. Pope Pius XII filed a protest, but the archbishop was held for 17 days. On the day after his release, Tito summoned Stepinac for a face-to-face meeting. The Communist leader wanted the Croatian Church to sever its ties with Rome. Stepinac, of course, refused. Tito then put the Catholic Church in his crosshairs.

Persecution got so bad that a synod of bishops met to discuss it on September 17-22, 1945. They issued a pastoral letter that was read in churches across the country. It said the bishops were willing to work with the state for the good of the people, but at the same time they condemned "all ideologies and social systems not based on the eternal principles of Christian Revelation, but on shallow material foundations, that is to say philosophic atheism." They protested the killing of over 200 Catholic priests and believers, "whose lives were taken away in unlawful trials based upon false accusations by haters of the Catholic

Church.” They also protested the suppression of youth education, the requisitioning of Church property, the destruction of graves, and the confiscation of the Catholic press and print shops. Stepinac was the President of the Bishops Conference and the first signatory of the letter.

In October 1945, Tito wrote a newspaper editorial accusing Stepinac of declaring war on the fledgling government. Within days, the government launched an intense propaganda campaign. Priests and bishops, including Stepinac, were attacked physically and accused of having collaborated with Hitler. Serbian radio condemned Stepinac as a war criminal and paved the way for his arrest. Stepinac was charged and put on trial for allegedly collaborating with the Ustashe. The trial drew much critical coverage from Western media and protests from those who recognized it as a fraudulent show trial.

Stepinac was denied even minimal due process. Prosecution witnesses were told what to say, and the defense was not allowed cross-examination. Many defense witnesses were not permitted to testify, and much of Stepinac’s evidence was excluded. Stepinac was permitted to meet with his attorney for only an hour prior to the trial, and he was not permitted to consult with the representative sent by the pope.

On the fourth day of the trial, Stepinac gave a 38-minute speech. *Time* magazine reported that the archbishop “temporarily lost his equanimity.” He “shook an angry finger at the court, cried: ‘Not only does the church in Yugoslavia have no freedom, but in a short while the church will be annihilated.’” He accused his Communist prosecutors of behaving like the Gestapo. He said his conscience was clear. Publication of the statement (or arguments made by his attorneys) was prohibited during the entire rule of the Communists in the former Yugoslavia. Fortunately, there is no such problem today. Harris provides his readers with the full text of the speech.

The trial verdict, of course, was set in advance. Stepinac was found guilty of all six counts. He was sentenced to 16 years of hard labor, but due to the indignation throughout the democratic world, he was not made to do the hard labor. He was, however, put in Lepoglava prison, which was used to hold political dissidents in harsh conditions.

In the late 1940s, pressure mounted, particularly in the United States, for Tito to release Stepinac. In 1951, Tito expressed a willingness to do so if he would leave Yugoslavia. Stepinac's answer was that: "They will never make me leave unless they put me on a plane by force and take me over the frontier. It is my duty in these difficult times to stay with the people." Tito finally consented to hold the archbishop under house arrest in his native village of Krašić.

Pope Pius XII named Stepinac a cardinal, but he did not travel to Rome for a ceremony due to concern about being permitted to return. He died in 1960 of a blood disorder, which was said to have been caused by the conditions he endured in prison. Tests of his remains conducted by Vatican investigators suggest that he may have been poisoned. Harris includes a separate appendix dealing with that issue.

After the fall of communism, one of the first acts of the new parliament was to apologize for the archbishop's show trial. The prosecutor acknowledged that the trial was motivated by Stepinac's bad relationship with the communists, not because of his relationship with the Nazis. Others involved in the fabrication of documents also came forward and confirmed that Stepinac's trial was a fraud.

Pope St. John Paul II beatified Stepinac as a martyr in October 1998. He said the cardinal stood against "the dictatorship of communism, where he again fought for the faith, for the presence of God in the world, the true humanity that is dependent on the presence of God." In June 2011, Pope Benedict XVI praised Stepinac as a courageous defender of

those oppressed by the Ustashe, including Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies.

Recently, Pope Francis arranged a special commission of Catholic and Orthodox leaders to explore Stepinac's wartime record. The commission would do well to begin with Harris's book. It contains 409 pages, 12 chapters, and four interesting addendums: Stepinac's speech in the court; the list of a number of officials in the administration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia during 1930s; a text concerning the issue of whether Stepinac was poisoned; and Stepinac's spiritual testament.

Stepinac: His Life and Times is an important treatment of a giant figure in Catholic history. Robin Harris has done a great service to truth by unearthing the facts and telling the story of this truly heroic man.

Ronald J. Rychlak is a Professor at the University of Mississippi School of Law and one of the world's most noted scholars on the heroics of Pope Pius XII. He also serves on the advisory board of the Catholic League.

TRUMP MUST NIX HHS MANDATE

Almost a year has passed since the Supreme Court instructed President Obama's Justice Department to work with the plaintiffs in reaching reconciliation on the Health and Human Services mandate. Recently, the Justice Department under President Trump asked the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals for another 60 days to reach a settlement.

Trump officials say the delay is necessary because many staff positions have not yet been filled, and the issues involved

are “complex.” But that hasn’t stopped the Justice Department from settling other lawsuits. Moreover, this business about the mandate being “complex” is a dodge: either the mandate is an affront to religious liberty or it is not.

The Obama administration angered Catholics when they learned that it was targeting such groups as the Little Sisters of the Poor. Initially, the Obama team tried to force the Little Sisters to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plan. Under pressure, the lawyers scaled back their demands, but they still sought to compromise the nuns by making them complicit in approving the mandate.

The most pernicious aspect of this issue is rarely discussed. Just how did the Obama administration manage to put the arm on the Little Sisters in the first place? By adopting the thinking of the ACLU.

It was the ACLU’s lawyers in California who first broached the idea that a Catholic institution is not legitimately Catholic if it staffs and serves a large body of people who are not Catholic. The Obama administration, under the tutelage of HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius—a rabid defender of partial-birth abortion—tailored the language of the mandate to meet that test. Therefore, because the Little Sisters do not discriminate against non-Catholics in tending to their needs, they are not considered Catholic!

In sharp contrast to his predecessor, Trump has shown himself to be religion-friendly. He needs to recognize, however, that the HHS mandate is a non-negotiable issue: If he wants to keep the support of Catholics, the HHS mandate must go.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY CASE BEFORE HIGH COURT

The U.S. Supreme Court recently heard oral arguments in an important religious liberty case. The issue is pretty straight forward: when it comes to the disbursement of public funds for a secular purpose, can a state treat a religious entity in a manner that is different from a non-sectarian institution?

Trinity Lutheran Church in Columbia, Missouri applied for a state grant to pay for a playground that serves its preschool. It was turned down: aid to churches is forbidden by the Missouri Constitution. Trinity Lutheran filed suit, arguing that its religious liberty rights, as affirmed by the First Amendment, have been violated; it also maintained that the Fourteenth Amendment's provision ensuring "equal protection before the law" has been sundered.

The amicus brief against Trinity Lutheran was filed by Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the Interfaith Alliance, and six Jewish groups. The brief is weak, in many respects.

The first weakness is evident right from the get-go. "The framers of the First Amendment and of the early state constitutions sought broadly to protect religion against the corrupting influences that could result from public funding"

In fact, the founders allowed state churches to exist at the time of the First Amendment; there was one in Massachusetts until 1833. President Jefferson, typically cited as a defender of a strict wall separating church and state, provided public funding to the Kaskaskias Indians: the money was earmarked to build a Catholic Church. By contrast, the faithful at Trinity Lutheran are merely seeking public funds to fix their

playground.

The brief takes a generous, and fundamentally dishonest, view of the origins of the Missouri Constitution. It offers a beneficent reason why aid to religious entities was banned, holding that it was done to avoid the political and social problems attendant to such aid. In fact, nativism was at work: the goal was to keep Catholics in their place.

Nearly 80 percent of the states today have a provision that was built into their constitution as a direct result of bigotry. During Recon-struction, the Ku Klux Klan and other anti-Catholics campaigned to deny aid to Catholic schools—schools that were founded to escape Protestant bigotry—and they found a sympathetic ear when Senator James Blaine took up their cause. Though he failed to amend the U.S. Constitution to reflect this goal, his effort was not in vain: one state after another changed its constitution to accomplish this end.

Some things never change. The brief has an air of paranoia to it. It raises the question of whether there might be religious symbols in the playground. What about religious classes? Will religious ceremonies take place there? Will there be any indoctrination?

It's a playground—not a church. What are they afraid of? That the playground is going to be converted into some kind of grand venue for Bible readings? Or that unsuspecting neighbors might be targeted for proselytization, right next to the swings?

Are these lawyers even aware that voters regularly cast their ballots in church basements? Has anyone been corrupted by this practice? For that matter, if churches accommodate the government without a problem, why can't government accommodate churches?

We have had paid chaplains in the House and Senate since the

beginning of the Republic. They open each session with a prayer—in a public building—and no one, save for fanatics, is upset.

“REAL O’NEALS” GETS THE AX

Recently, Bill Donohue wrote a news release stating, “Disney/ABC won’t come right out and say it, so I will: The obituary for ‘The Real O’Neals’ has been written and will soon be announced.” Now it’s official—the show is dead.

If Disney/ABC had any integrity they would have axed the script once it was submitted. Our problem all along had less to do with the stupid content of the show than it did with whom it was based on—Dan Savage.

Savage is a vile anti-Catholic who is known for his sick sex columns and his obscene rants against priests. What he has said about Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI is so foul that the *New York Times* would not allow Donohue to describe what he said by inserting an asterisk in place of letters. Yes, his words were that filthy.

Disney/ABC would never base a show on the life of David Duke, but it had no problem offering a show based on Duke’s Catholic counterpart. That’s why we led a two-year fight against this show.

There is no doubt in our mind that they would have dropped this show after its first season had it not been for the perception that it was yielding to pressure. This only goes to show how depraved the officials are at Disney/ABC—image and ideology trumped money and decency.

KIM KARDASHIAN IS NO VIRGIN MARY

We've never seen any indication that Kim Kardashian venerates the Blessed Virgin Mary—she is a former porn star—so her latest headline-grabbing stunt can only be seen as exploitative.

On her Kimoji Instagram page, Kardashian presented an image of herself as the Virgin Mary; she was promoting merchandise. The animated image then blurred into a colorful, psychedelic celebration of “Weed Day,” an annual celebration of marijuana.

Advertised on Kardashian's Kimoji website was a candle with the same image of her as the Virgin Mary; it was selling for \$18. It was placed between two other items for sale: a “fire weed sock” and an “ass tray”; the former celebrates marijuana use and the latter is a photo of her bare mammoth behind.

To top it all off, while filming scenes for “Keeping Up With the Kardashians,” Kim was photographed wearing a clingy, see-through black dress with an image of the Virgin Mary emblazoned between her breasts.

We know that she and her family have been through a lot—their problems are mostly self-induced—but that is no excuse for ripping off Catholic iconography to make a quick buck and grab headline news.

CHRIS HARDWICK NEEDS REHAB AGAIN

The April 28 edition of “@Midnight with Chris Hardwick” featured a comedian no one ever heard of, Jo Koy. He showed his brilliance by making a gratuitous remark about a priest who “put his hands up my ass.”

On the April 19th edition, Hardwick said if “you get fired for a raft of sexual harassment charges, you can always find a job in the Catholic Church.”

We didn’t address the April 19 smear after it happened, but when the show libeled Catholicism again, it was worth mentioning.

Hardwick obviously has a problem with sexuality, and an obsession with the scatological. Perhaps—this is just a guess—it has something to do with his own experiences: his multimillion dollar home in Hollywood Hills features an outdoor mosaic tile bath with a 200-year-old faucet.

Hardwick went into rehab after his serious bout with alcoholism. Now it’s time he sought more serious help.

DEMOCRATS HAVE A CATHOLIC PROBLEM

Heath Mello has divided the Democratic Party. This is unusual given his low profile: he is running for mayor of Omaha, Nebraska. What makes him controversial among Democrats are his pro-life convictions.

Senator Bernie Sanders, an Independent, has taken the high road, prudently saying that although he favors abortion rights, there should be room for Mello in the Democratic Party. Tom Perez, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, disagrees—there is no room for people like him.

Perez speaks for the base of the Party. The Daily Kos initially endorsed Mello, but pulled its support once it learned that his idea of human rights begins when humans are conceived. NARAL Pro-Choice America, the extreme pro-abortion organization, sided with Perez, calling Sanders' support for Mello "politically stupid."

Is it okay to hold "personal beliefs" against abortion and be a Democrat? Perez says it is, just so long as those beliefs are not voiced. "If they try to legislate or govern that way," he declared, "we will take them on." In other words, keep your pro-life ideas to yourself or else.

So whatever happened to those grand ideas about diversity and inclusion? Perez just blew them up. Where does this leave Catholics?

It's been a long time since Catholics have been welcomed in the Democratic Party. Geoffrey Layman of Columbia University cites 1972 as the pivotal year when secularists took command. So do Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio of Baruch College. That was the year Catholics were effectively driven out of command positions in the Party.

After Senator Hubert Humphrey lost to Richard Nixon in 1968, the McGovern Commission was established to reform the way presidential candidates were chosen. "Catholics had made up about one in four Humphrey votes in 1968," observes author Mark Stricherz, "yet they received only one in fourteen slots on the commission in 1969." When the voters went to the polls in 1972, secular Americans chose the Democrats by a margin of 3-1.

Fast forward two decades to 1992. According to Layman, "The Democratic Party now appears to be a party whose core of support comes from secularists, Jews, and the less committed members of the major religious traditions." Similarly, Bolce and De Maio said, "60 percent of first-time white delegates at the [1992] Democratic convention in New York City either claimed no attachment to religion or displayed the minimal attachment by attending worship services 'a few times a year' or less."

Why did this happen? Mike McCurry, former press secretary to President Bill Clinton, explained it this way: "Because we want to be politically correct, in particular being sensitive to Jews, that's taken the party to a direction where faith language is soft and opaque."

Now the "faith language" is just about gone. In the 2016 Democratic Party Platform, there are 14 sentences on specific rights for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People, and two vague sentences on "respecting faith" at home. Though LGBT rights are nowhere mentioned in the Bill of Rights, and the First Amendment protects religious liberty, the Platform warns against "the misuse of religion to discriminate" against LGBT persons. Religious rights are not mentioned at all, save for a line condemning ISIS.

Mello and Perez are equally Catholic, though not all Catholics are equal. The Democrats need to decide if there is room in their increasingly shrinking tent to house practicing Catholics, the ones most likely to see abortion as "intrinsically evil."