

PELOSI & BIDEN ROIL USCCB; ABORTION ISSUE IGNITES

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and vice presidential candidate Joseph Biden recently misrepresented the Church's teaching on abortion, drawing fire from more than two dozen bishops. Their obstinacy in the face of criticism only emboldened more bishops to take issue with them.

Tom Brokaw asked Pelosi on "Meet the Press" to comment on when life begins. Here is what she said: "I would say as an ardent, practicing Catholic, this is an issue that I have studied for a long time. And what I know is, over the centuries, the doctors of the Church have not been able to make that definition."

A stunned Brokaw, who is not Catholic, told Pelosi that the Catholic Church "feels very strongly" that life begins at conception. Pelosi answered, "I understand. And this is like maybe 50 years or something like that. So again, over the history of the Church, this is an issue of controversy."

Pelosi's obtuse answer merited a gift from the Catholic League. We tried to educate the House Speaker by sending her a copy of *Catholicism for Dummies* (by the way, it is an excellent book, written by two great priests, Rev. John Trigilio and Rev. Kenneth Brighenti—both are friends of Bill Donohue). Her response also triggered news releases from two sources: Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput and the Catholic League. Plenty more bishops, priests and lay persons quickly followed.

Pelosi dug herself in deeper a few days later when her office issued a statement acknowledging that while the Church is against abortion, St. Augustine said that ensoulment doesn't occur until 46 days after conception (she failed to mention

that St. Augustine was opposed to abortion). The controversy continued right up to the point where her bishop, San Francisco Archbishop George H. Niederauer, requested a meeting with her.

A few weeks later, Biden appeared on “Meet the Press” announcing that abortion was a religious issue that was looked upon differently by different religions. He said that while he accepts the Church’s teaching on when life begins, he did not want to impose it on others. Complicating matters, he said that St. Thomas Aquinas did not believe that life began “until quickening, 40 days after conception.” He, too, failed to note that Aquinas was opposed to abortion. Many bishops, and the Catholic League, jumped on his remarks as misleading and counterproductive.

What Pelosi and Biden have done is reprehensible.

PALIN’S RELIGION

Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin’s religion has come under severe scrutiny. Unfortunately, some of the coverage has been downright unfair.

Baptized Catholic, Palin was raised in a Pentecostal church; since 2002, she has been a member of a non-denominational Christian church. She garnered the attention of the secular media when she urged the faithful to “pray for our military” and for “our national leaders” who are “sending them out on a task that is from God.”

MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow interpreted this comment as saying that “the commander-in-chief for our side in the Iraq war is a

mighty general whose initials are GOD." Most Christians, obviously, would not agree with that spin.

Maddow also wondered why Palin didn't "get up and walk out" when a guest speaker from Jews for Jesus spoke at her church (a talk the ADL found non-problematic). Barack Obama, we know, did not "get up and walk out" on his own disgraced pastor for 20 years, yet MSNBC never got too worked up about that.

MSNBC's Keith Olbermann was worse, speaking in the most sarcastic of terms about her religious beliefs. He even took the time to alert viewers to the news that in Palin's church "they speak in tongues." For the record, Palin's pastor said he "never saw" her speak in tongues.

Palin may not be a Catholic anymore. But she certainly is the victim of a vicious smear campaign conducted by the secular left. The secularists neither understand, nor respect, Christianity.

"COMMON GROUND" CATHOLICS

William A. Donohue

After George W. Bush won reelection in 2004, it was disclosed that "values voters" played a major role in defeating the Democrats. More than any other issue, it was abortion that proved decisive: the "values voters" preferred the pro-life position of the Republican Party.

It didn't take long before some Democrats, especially Catholics and Protestants, decided that it was imperative not to allow the Republicans to take ownership of this issue. But they were faced with a big problem: the Democrats were

unequivocally committed to abortion rights—for any reason and at any time during pregnancy.

Enter James Carville and Paul Begala. They argued that the Democrats would continue to lose election after election until they finally pared back in their support for abortion rights. Accordingly, they recommended that Democrats oppose partial-birth abortion and support parental notification laws. Their pragmatism, however, fell on deaf ears: the leadership of the Democratic Party would not budge in its pro-abortion position.

So the only thing left for Christian Democrats who were worried about ceding this entire issue to the Republicans was to create the fiction that it was possible to support abortion-on-demand by posturing a pro-life position. To accomplish this trick, they decided to defend abortion as a constitutional right—including partial-birth abortion—while promoting social policies that might reduce the need for abortions. They labeled this a “common ground” approach, one that serviced the “common good.” As they soon discovered, however, the central problem remained.

To begin with, they never found a plausible way to answer the most basic question of them all: When does life begin? Recall that when Sen. Barack Obama was asked this question by the evangelical heavyweight Rick Warren, he fumbled. Obama actually said that answering this question was “above my pay grade.” By contrast, when Sen. John McCain was asked the same question, he quickly said, “At conception.”

McCain’s pro-life voting record squares completely with his answer, but Obama’s pro-abortion record is not explained by his evasion. If abortion doesn’t kill innocent human life, then it must be assumed that Obama believes life begins some time after birth. But when? Recall that when he was in the Illinois state senate, he led the fight against mandating health care for children born alive as a result of a botched abortion. In other words, he supports selective infanticide.

Now those who are pushing the “common ground” approach must know that they, too, are a walking contradiction. They don’t want to make any abortions illegal, and indeed they refuse to criticize Obama for his off-the-charts advocacy of abortion rights. So when they say they want to reduce abortions, they are right back to where they started from. Why would it be necessary to reduce a medical procedure that doesn’t harm anyone? After all, no one says we need to reduce the need for root canals.

There are other problems for these folks, as well. The Platform of the Democratic Party does not seek a “common ground” approach to human trafficking—it supports laws that criminalize labor and sex trafficking. Yet when it comes to abortion, it balks at any legal remedy. Is this because the Democrats are more bent out of shape over human trafficking than abortion? To put it differently, making human trafficking illegal hasn’t stopped it from occurring, so why not legalize it and then support “common ground” strategies that reduce its occurrence?

These “values” Democrats will tell you that it would be wrong to criminalize abortion because that would bring us back to the days when women were imprisoned for having an abortion. MSNBC’s Chris Matthews, for example, says this all the time. But the fact of the matter is that women were not imprisoned for having an abortion in the pre-*Roe v. Wade* days—it was the abortionist who faced prosecution.

In Leslie J. Reagan’s pro-abortion book, *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867-1973*, she makes it clear that women were not routinely prosecuted and imprisoned for having abortions during this period. Indeed, she lists only one such incident of this kind, and that was an unusual case in 1971 when a Florida woman was arrested for manslaughter. So the Matthews argument is nothing more than a scare tactic.

It must also be said that these “values” Democrats went mute when Nancy Pelosi totally misrepresented the Catholic Church’s teaching on abortion; none issued even the mildest rebuke. This certainly included Sen. Bob Casey, Jr., the so-called pro-life Catholic Democrat from Pennsylvania whose voting record on abortion lines up with NARAL—the most radical pro-abortion group in the nation—65 percent of the time.

Finally, the presidents of NARAL and Planned Parenthood spoke at the Democratic National Convention, and the most radical pro-abortion Political Action Committee of them all, EMILY’s List, hosted a big party. If this doesn’t signal what a fraud the “common ground” ploy is, nothing does.

Congressmen Address Pelosi’s Statements

Some of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s fellow congressmen, who are pro-life and Catholic, responded to her statements about the Catholic Church’s teachings concerning when life begins. Please click [here](#) to read their correspondence to her.

BISHOPS RESPOND TO PELOSI

he following statement was released by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops following Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s misrepresentation of the Catholic Church’s teaching against abortion:

In the course of a “Meet the Press” interview on abortion and other public issues on August 24, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi misrepresented the history and nature of the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church against abortion.

In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law.” (No. 2271)

In the Middle Ages, uninformed and inadequate theories about embryology led some theologians to speculate that specifically human life capable of receiving an immortal soul may not exist until a few weeks into pregnancy. While in canon law these theories led to a distinction in penalties between very early and later abortions, the Church’s moral teaching never justified or permitted abortion at any stage of development.

These mistaken biological theories became obsolete over 150 years ago when scientists discovered that a new human individual comes into being from the union of sperm and egg at fertilization. In keeping with this modern understanding, the Church teaches that from the time of conception (fertilization), each member of the human species must be given the full respect due to a human person, beginning with respect for the fundamental right to life.

More information on the Church’s teaching on this issue can be found in our brochure *The Catholic Church is a Pro-Life Church*.

PELOSI GETS AN “F” IN RELIGION

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi would have us believe that the Catholic Church was not always opposed to abortion. And she says this while admitting that she has studied the subject for a long time. Perhaps she should take time out to read what the Catholic Catechism says.

“Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable.”

Pelosi’s office muddled this issue further when it released a statement on August 27, three days after the House Speaker’s infamous “Meet the Press” interview. This time her office mentioned St. Augustine’s remarks on ensoulment; it was done to justify her position that the Catholic Church has entertained different ideas about conception and abortion throughout the ages. But it didn’t work. Australian Cardinal George Pell made a clear-cut statement about this issue in his 1997 book, *Issues of Faith and Morals*.

Cardinal Pell wrote that St. Augustine “believed that the embryo was ensouled at 46 days. Nevertheless, he also believed it was gravely wrong to kill a formed or unformed fetus.” It is instructive to note that philosophical discussions about the soul, and research on embryology, continue to advance beyond the knowledge available in the 5th century. In any event, Pelosi finds no relief for her bizarre reasoning by citing St. Augustine, or any other Church Father.

Pelosi also said that not all Catholics agree with the Church on abortion. To which we told the press, “So what? There are plenty of Catholics living a life rife with sin that seek to

justify their behavior by saying they disagree with the Church on the source of their delinquency. What the House Speaker doesn't get is that the Church is no more a democracy than the Democratic and Republican parties are: none arrive at conclusions based on referenda. Moreover, in the instance of the Catholic Church, the Magisterium is not the functional equivalent of the DNC or the RNC."

We ended our statement by saying, "Maybe that's the source of Pelosi's confusion—she really doesn't understand the difference between the teaching authority of the Catholic Church and the DNC."

The USCCB was so upset with Pelosi's second statement that it issued a two-page reply that offered a historical account of the Church's teaching on abortion. The bishops released this document to "help end confusion caused by recent misrepresentations of Catholic Church teaching on abortion," a process that was "prompted by misleading remarks by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi."

All of this suggests that Pelosi is wildly out of touch with the Catholic Church. She no doubt travels in some strange social circles in San Francisco, the most anti-Catholic city in the nation. But this is no excuse: she has an obligation to know, and abide by, what her religion teaches.

Just as we went to press, we learned from the Archdiocese of San Francisco that Archbishop Niederauer's meeting with Pelosi would be a "personal and private conversation."

OBAMA AND BIDEN MUDDY ABORTION ISSUE

Appearing on the September 7 edition of ABC-TV's "This Week," Sen. Barack Obama was asked to comment on his recent quip that he could not say when life begins because it was "above my pay grade." He called that response "too flip," offering, "All I meant to communicate was that I don't presume to be able to answer these kinds of theological questions."

On the same day, Sen. Joseph Biden, Obama's running mate, appeared on "Meet the Press." When asked about abortion, he said, "I'm prepared to accept the teachings of my church." He stressed that "as a matter of faith" he accepts the position that "life begins at the moment of conception," but that he did not want to impose his religious judgment on others. Biden also referenced St. Thomas Aquinas, saying that the great theologian did not believe that life began "until quickening, 40 days after conception."

The Catholic League issued the following statement to the media:

"Obama and Biden have muddied the abortion issue further by pretending that it is not, first and foremost, a human rights issue. When life begins is a question answered by science, and that answer is not in doubt: life begins at conception. That's why atheists like Nat Hentoff are against abortion—because it kills! By casting abortion as a matter of religion, Obama and Biden are seeking to take an issue which has universal significance and turn it into a parochial quarrel.

"Biden would do well not to invoke Aquinas as giving support for his views. It is true that St. Thomas believed that ensoulment did not take place until 40 days after conception, but at no time did he ever seek to justify abortion—he knew it

was a grave evil.

“Obama, who calls himself a Christian, yesterday referred to his ‘Muslim faith.’ Why he said that is not known, but it is indisputable that Catholicism and Islam are both right on the scientific question of when life begins. It’s time Obama and Biden saw abortion for what it is—the most fundamental civil rights issue of our time.”

Obama and Biden are shooting themselves in the foot, big time.

BIDEN DIGS HIMSELF A HOLE

On September 9, Sen. Joseph Biden said that if the Republicans were serious about helping disabled children they would support stem-cell research. His comment was a clear shot at Sarah Palin; she chose to give birth to a Down’s syndrome baby rather than have an abortion (the way 90 percent of women do when notified they are carrying a disabled baby).

Biden’s remark, we pointed out, was not only inaccurate, it exposed his Catholic Achilles’ heel once again. No one in public life has ever taken a position against all stem-cell research; adult stem-cell research is not ethically problematic. What millions of Americans object to is embryonic stem-cell research, and that is because it is impossible to do this kind of research without destroying the embryo.

“Now it may come as news to Biden that the embryo represents nascent human life,” we said in a press release, “though it is not clear whether this would matter to a man who agrees with NARAL 75 percent of the time.”

The Catholic Church, to which Biden belongs, is opposed to

embryonic stem-cell research; McCain and Obama, along with Biden, are not. In this regard, Palin is more Catholic than Biden. "Not only does he look bad in comparison to Palin," we said, "it is coming at a time when Biden is being hit with a barrage of criticism from bishops angry with his 'Meet the Press' appearance where he declared abortion to be a personal matter."

Bishop Morlino of Madison, Wisconsin saw Biden on TV and quickly put aside the homily he prepared for Mass: he instead branded Biden's distortion of this issue as breaching church and state lines. Archbishop Chaput of Denver said it would not be wise for Biden to present himself for Communion. Biden, who hails from Scranton, was indirectly cited by Scranton Bishop Martino: he said that "No Catholic politician who supports the culture of death should approach Holy Communion."

Biden's outgoing bishop, Wilmington Bishop Saltarelli, said that if Biden becomes vice president, he would bar him from speaking in Catholic schools. And Francis Malooly, the new Bishop of Wilmington, made it clear that he also has a problem with Biden. Indeed, he took sides with Philadelphia Archbishop Rigali and Bridgeport Bishop Lori, both of whom blasted Biden for contradicting the Church's teaching on abortion.

Biden not only embarrassed himself, he acted like a magnet for the bishops—they were drawn into this fight, just the way Pelosi beckoned them to act. It makes one wonder what side these two are really on. After all, common sense would seem to dictate that it is always foolish to pick a fight with the bishops. But common sense is apparently lacking. Either that or what we are witnessing is unsurpassed hubris.

As the only Catholic on either ticket, Biden could have been a real asset to Obama, but instead he has become a liability.

CASEY BLOWS IT ON ABORTION

Sen. Bob Casey, Jr.'s speech at this year's Democratic National Convention was supposed to be a breakthrough moment for the Party: in 1992 the Democratic National Convention prohibited Gov. Bob Casey, Sr. from making a pro-life speech. Casey, Jr. blew his chance to make a strong comment about abortion and only offered the standard cliché about promoting the "common good" by seeking "common ground."

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. never settled for a "common ground" approach to fight racism—he sought to win. Similarly, Gov. Casey did not seek to fight abortion by looking for "common ground": He knew that the "common ground" could only be achieved by protecting the lives of innocent human beings.

Moreover, when it comes to the issue of human trafficking, the Democratic Party Platform does not seek "common ground"—it wants "strong legislation and enforcement." But when it comes to abortion, the Party jettisons a legal strategy, offering instead the tired mantra about seeking "common ground."

Casey should have taken advantage of this opportunity and reassured Catholics that he is firmly pro-life. Instead, Casey dropped the ball.

DEMOCRATS ASKED TO NIX

OFFENSIVE BLOGGERS

The Democratic Party credentialed over 120 blogs for this year's Democratic National Convention; those who received credentials were allowed to cover the Convention at the Pepsi Center. Included on that list were a few offensive sites; the most offensive was *Bitch Ph.D.*

On the home page of *Bitch Ph.D.* there was a picture of two children: one of them was shown flashing his middle finger. The lead post was titled "Jesus Christ." It began with, "I'm a really crappy Catholic who hasn't been to mass in ages because most parishes around here 'will' insist on being aggressively anti-abortion..." The writer then objected to some children's toys on the grounds that they were more offensive than desecrating the Eucharist. The toys were actually balloons that were made to depict Jesus in various poses, including a crucified Christ; one of the images showed Jesus with a penis. Several people commented on this image; some of which made patently obscene comments.

We quickly called for the offensive blogs to be cut from the Convention's list of credentialed sites. The offensive sites did not function as responsible media outlets and offended Catholics, as well as others. We called on Convention CEO Leah Daughtry to nix these offensive blogs. We said, "To allow them access to the Democratic National Convention sends a message to Catholics they will not forget."