

# Gov. Clinton wants Catholic vote

By Father Richard P. McBrien  
Syndicated columnist

This year's Democratic nominee for president, Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, seems determined not to repeat the mistakes former Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis made in 1988. One of Dukakis' most serious blunders was to decline an invitation from the University of Notre Dame to speak on campus during the fall campaign.

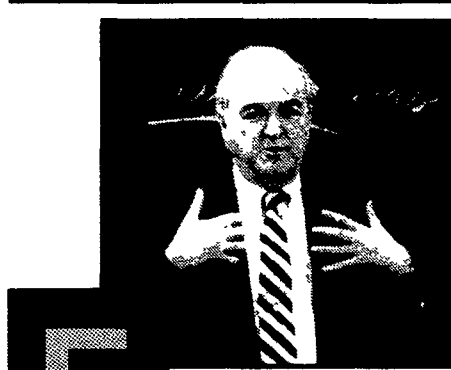
Gov. Dukakis needed to win a substantial majority of Catholic voters four years ago if he were to have any realistic hope of becoming president. But because he and the party paid too little attention to one of their traditional bulwarks of support, Dukakis and George Bush split the Catholic vote and Bush won the election.

According to recent polls, many of those same Catholics who voted for Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984, and for Bush in 1988, are prepared to "come home" to the party of their parents and grandparents. Economics, not social issues, is the driving force.

But the Democrats should not take this reemerging Catholic support for granted.

First, the national ticket is headed this year by two Southern Baptists. It's not that Catholics are not ecumenical, but like all interest groups they need to feel that somebody up there understands them and takes them seriously. They certainly had no difficulty believing that in 1960.

Until Gov. Clinton's Notre Dame



## ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY

speech last month, neither he nor Sen. Albert Gore had shown any explicit concern for Catholic voters (at least none that I'm aware of), even though Catholics constitute nearly one quarter of the entire electorate.

Second, last July's Democratic national convention was vociferously and unremittingly pro-choice. Many believe Pennsylvania Gov. Robert Casey was denied access to the convention podium in order to prevent the outbreak of a divisive floor debate over abortion.

This is not to say that most Catholics are pro-lifers, in the conventional sense of that term. The majority of Catholics — like the majority of Americans — do not favor a constitutional ban on all abortions. Neither, however, do they support unrestricted access to abortion —

which some call abortion-on-demand.

By contrast, many who identify themselves as pro-choice reject all restrictions on a woman's right to an abortion — for example, a 24-hour waiting period. In effect, they regard abortion as a form of elective surgery, where the decision is a matter for the woman and her physician alone.

But for a majority of Catholics (as for a majority of Americans), there is also a moral issue involved here because every abortion involves a human life's termination.

The fetus may not yet be a baby (contrary to the slogans on pro-life placards), but it is human life at some rudimentary stage of development, and deserves respect and even some measure of legal protection.

For many Catholics, therefore, while abortion shouldn't be made so difficult that a woman's access to it is effectively denied, neither should abortion be made so easy that regard for the unborn's life is all but lost.

Enter Notre Dame: In accepting the invitation to speak on the nation's most prominent Catholic campus, Gov. Clinton, unlike Dukakis, acknowledged the importance of his party's large and historically loyal Catholic constituency.

And in delivering an ecumenical, pro-tolerance, pro-community service speech, so filled with apt references to Catholic social teachings, he sounded themes congenial to Catholic hearts.

At the same time, he did not pander to Catholics by promising tax vouchers for parents of children in

Catholic schools — a promise the Republicans have never redeemed since President Richard Nixon first made it some 20 years ago — nor did Gov. Clinton pander to Catholics by pretending to take a hard-line position on abortion, only to negate it through subsequent comments during press and television interviews, as the president and the vice-president have done.

Gov. Clinton reminded his Notre Dame audience that, if elected, he will be the first president to have graduated from a Catholic university (Georgetown). He had also attended Catholic school for a couple of years in Hot Springs, Ark.

He likened his presence at Notre Dame to John F. Kennedy's in Houston, where Kennedy appeared before an audience of skeptical Protestant ministers during the 1960 campaign.

At Notre Dame, Gov. Clinton reached beyond his Southern Baptist base to proclaim the same inclusive message that John Kennedy had proclaimed in Houston 32 years earlier: We have to emphasize what unites us rather than what divides us. Only by working together, without regard for creed or color, can we begin to solve this nation's problems.

If Gov. Clinton's Notre Dame speech was indicative of a new sensitivity to Catholic voters, then the man who takes the oath of office next January may indeed be the first U.S. president to have graduated from a Catholic university. And a clear majority of U.S. Catholics will have contributed to his victory.

The Founders Club of the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester  
proudly presents

## SHIRLEY JONES

### IN CONCERT

with the  
**ROCHESTER PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA**  
3 PM SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15  
*One Show Only!*  
Eastman Theatre • 60 Gibbs Street • Rochester

Tickets: \$28.50 - \$24.50 - \$20.50 - \$15.50  
Available at the Founders Club Box Office  
Call 288-4817

### SPA APARTMENTS

**For Senior Citizens**

Spa Apartments is located in a quiet village setting with many services available to meet your needs. Meals, house-keeping, and cable TV are just a few of the many services we offer.

Call or write  
**SPA APARTMENTS INC.**  
11 East Main St.,  
Clifton Springs, NY 14432  
(315) 462-3080  
Open Mon-Fri. 9am-4pm

### BARTOLOMEO FUNERAL HOME, INC.

Peter W. Guillari, Jr. Philip P. Perotto Michael P. Perotto  
Personalized service in the community since 1922.  
1425 Lexington Avenue Rochester, NY 14606  
conveniently located near 390  
**(716) 254-5400**

CLIP & SAVE

### SPECIAL TRUNK SHOWING OCTOBER 22nd. 10am - 5pm

An authorized P.W. Minor representative will be in the store displaying a full line of footwear available in men's & women's sizes, widths, styles and colors.

### A dream come true.

A dream shoe at a dream price! Your invited to find out how a pair of Xtra Depth® shoes can make your feet feel better than they've ever felt before. And save money at the same time. It's like a dream come true.

Bring this ad with you and **GET \$20 OFF** on any pair of in-stock

*Xtra depth shoes*  
BY P. W. MINOR

Offer good through October 31, 1992. Not valid with any other coupon offer.

## LOTEMPIO SHOE STORE

Certified Orthopedic Shoe Technician 790 Ridge Rd., Webster • 671-8289  
Mon-Fri 9-6; Sat 9-5  
(West of 5 Mile Line Rd. next to Bethany Marine World)