

# Judge politicians on their full record

A full-page advertisement appeared last month in *The Washington Times*, declaring "You can't be both Catholic and pro-abortion." Identifying 12 members of the U.S. Senate — 11 Democrats and one Republican (Susan Collins of Maine) — who it says "fraudulently" claim to be Catholics, the ad was sponsored by the American Life League, founded and directed by Judie Brown. This organization not only opposes abortion under any circumstances but also contraception, sex education in schools and even the use of the rubella vaccine because it is created from human tissue cells.

A.L.L., which has also been critical of President Bush for not supporting the Human Life Amendment, is reported to have helped to establish Randall Terry's "rescue movement," which blockaded health-care clinics in the 1980s and early 1990s before being effectively stopped by application of federal anti-racketeering laws (known as RICO), a debilitating lawsuit which Terry settled with the National Organization for Women. Terry was also excommunicated from his own Protestant church in Binghamton, N.Y., for alleged sexual misconduct outside of his marriage.

Mrs. Brown sent letters to each of the 12 senators' bishops, urging disciplinary action, specifically the denial of Eucharist. Whether Bishop Robert Carlson of Sioux City, S.D., was responding to



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

that specific pressure in his still-confidential exchange of letters with Sen. Tom Daschle, Democratic leader in the U.S. Senate, is a matter of speculation.

The larger question is whether it would be consistent with long-standing official policy of the U.S. Catholic bishops for anyone to judge a Catholic politician's performance in office on the basis of one issue alone. The answer is clearly, "No."

Every four years the Administrative Board of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issues a statement, on behalf of all bishops, to assist Catholic voters in their evaluation of candidates for public office. The statements have always included some version of: "We hope that voters will examine the position of candidates on the full range of issues as well as their personal integrity, philosophy and performance."

Prior to the 1988 presidential campaign, the bishops added, "We are convinced that a consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework from

which we address all issues in the political arena. In this consistent ethic of life, we address a spectrum of issues, seeking to protect human life and promote human dignity from the inception of life to its final moment."

The next year then-Vice President George H.W. Bush publicly campaigned for pro-choice Republican candidates for the U.S. Senate and governorships and not a word of criticism was voiced from any Catholic quarter — and apparently not even from A.L.L.

Is a politically conservative Catholic politician — someone, for example, like Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania — any less vulnerable to criticism if he or she votes to impose an unfair tax burden on the poor, or supports capital punishment, or exposes the environment to exploitation and pollution, or curbs the rights of workers to form unions, or authorizes the president to wage a preventive war in Iraq?

As the U.S. Catholic bishops point out, the Catholic Church is not a one-issue church. Its moral campaign for life and against the "culture of death" is comprehensive in scope and consistent in content. The church wishes to protect human life at every point on the spectrum, not just life between conception and birth.

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

## Questions project cost in Penfield

To the editor:

I am writing to express my feelings regarding the expansion project at St. Joseph's, Penfield.

At a meeting held at St. Joseph's, I questioned Father Kevin (Murphy) about the priest shortage since he had stated priests can only say one Mass per day. I told him that under Canon law when there is a priest shortage the priest is allowed to say more than one Mass with the Bishop's permission. I felt that the Finance Committee was very angry with me and, although I tried several times to get their attention to speak, I was ignored. Finally I demanded to be heard. I told Father Kevin that this was not personal. However, since he became pastor the paid staff at the church had increased from one secretary to an additional nine positions. This is a drain on parish finances. What money is available for an emergency?

About 12 years ago \$4 million was spent to expand the school. Now \$7 million is needed for a resource center and church expansion. My disagreement is not with Father Kevin but with this expansion. I told Father that what we need is volunteers to help with work at the parish and community outreach. I repeated what I said at previous meetings and also said how meek those in attendance were. I will not attend any

future meetings. After much reflection I am sure this expansion project will move forward.

I have been approached to withhold my contribution, but instead I have increased what I contribute. I have been a member of this parish for 29 years and I will support the church 100 percent. I would like to thank the retired priests that are helping when the number of priests are dwindling and vocations are few. I know Father Kevin is doing his best to involve all parishioners.

Frank J. Palermo  
Whalen Road  
Penfield

## Suggestions for vocations

To the editor:

As the number of priests continues to dwindle in our diocese a few suggestions are in order.

First, discontinue "inclusive" language. It is not only an affront to males, it also violates church teaching. Vatican Council II, Volume I, explicitly states: "Therefore no person, not even a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority" (page 9-10).

Another way to encourage men to the priesthood would be to welcome more boys as altar servers. Many a priest has been an altar server prior to his ordination.

Third, eliminate the homosexual influence that exists in some of our seminaries. This in itself would turn off many a perspective priest.

It's no secret that a diocese that follows church teaching attracts more men to the seminaries. We should learn from such dioceses.

Robert Bart  
Ithaca

## Why demean rosary use?

To the editor:

I was sad and disappointed not only for myself but for our Blessed Mother

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