

Enjoy the Labor Day weekend.

The Rev. Thomas Reese, senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University, has some advice for candidates who seek to join the debate: Stick to politics — and support programs that truly help reduce the number of abortions. "It is a big mistake," Reese said, "for politicians to talk theology."

From the *New York Times*

For Ex-G.O.P. Official, Obama Is Candidate of Catholic Values

By PETER STEINFELS

When Douglas W. Kmiec endorsed Senator Barack Obama for president last spring, it made waves, especially among Roman Catholics.

A constitutional scholar who headed the Office of Legal Counsel under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, Mr. Kmiec was well known as an articulate opponent of abortion.

He explains his current stance in "Can a Catholic Support Him? Asking the Big Question about Barack Obama," which will be published in two weeks by Overlook Press. But reached this week in Denver, Mr. Kmiec agreed to give necessarily brief replies to questions sent by e-mail.

Q. What is your position on the morality of abortion, and how is it related to your religious faith?

A. I fully accept the teaching of the church that participating in an abortion is an intrinsic evil. My acceptance of abortion as a grave, categorical wrong is one part respectful deference to authoritative Catholic teaching and one part reasoned deduction from our scientific knowledge of genetics and the beginning of an individual life.

Q. Would you like to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned?

A. Yes, but not on the terms usually suggested by Republicans. *Roe* is mistaken constitutional law not just because it invalidated state laws on the subject but because it is contrary to what is described as a self-evident truth in the Declaration of Independence, namely, that we have an unalienable right to life from our creator. It may surprise the general citizenry that not a single sitting justice utilizes the declaration as a source of interpretative guidance.

But even employing the jurisprudential methods applied by the modern court, there is no satisfactory showing that abortion as a matter of custom and tradition was properly found to be an implied aspect of the liberties protected by the 14th Amendment.

Q. Given those views, why do you support Barack Obama?

A. There is a widespread misconception that overturning *Roe* is the only way to be pro-life. In fact, overturning *Roe* simply returns the matter to the states, which in their individual legislative determinations could then be entirely pro-abortion. I doubt that many of our non-legally-trained pro-life friends fully grasp the limited effect of overturning *Roe*.

Secondly, pundits like to toss about the notion that the future of *Roe* depends on one vote, the mythical fifth vote to overturn the decision. There are serious problems with this

assumption: first, Republicans have failed to achieve reversal in the five previous times they asked the court for it; and second, it is far from certain that only one additional vote is needed to reverse the decision in light of the principles of stare decisis by which a decided case ought not to be disturbed. Only Justices Thomas and Scalia have written and joined dissenting opinions suggesting the appropriateness of overturning Roe.

So given those views, the better question is how could a Catholic not support Barack Obama?

Senator Obama's articulated concerns with the payment of a living wage, access to health care, stabilizing the market for shelter, special attention to the needs of the disadvantaged and the importance of community are all part of the church's social justice mission.

Applying this to the issue of abortion, the senator has repeatedly indicated that he is not pro-abortion, that he understands the serious moral question it presents, and, most significantly, that he wants to move us beyond the 35 years of acrimony that have done next to nothing to reduce the unwanted pregnancies that give rise to abortions.

Q. But all the same, isn't your support at odds with Catholic teaching?

A. Quite the contrary. Senator Obama is articulating policies that permit faithful Catholics to follow the church's admonition that we continue to explore ways to give greater protection to human life.

Consider the choices: A Catholic can either continue on the failed and uncertain path of seeking to overturn Roe, which would result in the individual states doing their own thing, not necessarily, or in most states even likely, protective of the unborn. Or Senator Obama's approach could be followed, whereby prenatal and income support, paid maternity leave and greater access to adoption would be relied upon to reduce the incidence of abortion.

It is, of course, not enough for a Catholic legislator to declare himself or herself pro-choice and just leave it at that, but neither Senator Obama, who is not Catholic except by sensibility, nor Joe Biden, who is a lifelong Catholic, leaves matters in that unreflective way.

In my view, Obama and Biden seek to fulfill the call by Pope John Paul II, in the encyclical "Evangelium Vitae," to "ensure proper support for families and motherhood." It cannot possibly contravene Catholic doctrine to improve the respect for life by paying better attention to the social and economic conditions of women which correlate strongly with the number of abortions.

Q. You have been fiercely attacked by some Catholic abortion opponents and in one instance barred from receiving communion. How do you feel about that?

A. To be the subject of an angry homily at Mass last April 18 and excoriated as giving scandal for endorsing Senator Obama and then to be denied communion for that "offense" was the most humiliating experience in my faith life.

To be separated in that public manner from the receipt of the eucharist, and to be effectively shunned or separated from the body of Christ in the sense of that particular congregation, has left, I very much regret to say, a permanent spiritual scar. Thankfully, it has also given me a new appreciation for the significance of the sacrament in my daily worship. And the priest, having been called to order by Cardinal Roger Mahony, sent me an apology, which of course I have accepted.

Nonetheless, I remain deeply troubled that other church leaders not fall into similar traps. That would do untold damage to the church within the context of American democracy.

There are clearly partisan forces that want nothing more than to manufacture or stir up faith-based opposition to their political opponents. The church has been careful to underscore that Catholics have unfettered latitude to vote for any candidate so long as the intent of the Catholic voter is not to express approval of a grave evil.

Editorial from the *Chicago Tribune*, August 18, 2008

"There are certainly consequences even after sin is forgiven. So we have to deal with those consequences . . . and they can be severe, as they must be."

—*Cardinal Francis George, June 9, 2002*

On the day he spoke those words at Chicago's St. Juliana Parish, Cardinal George was talking about clerics who had sexually abused children. This wasn't his only invocation of "consequences" in that dramatic week. As U.S. bishops of the Roman Catholic Church gathered in Dallas, the cardinal also proposed unspecified "consequences" for bishops who mishandled abuse cases.

Unfortunately, George's brethren in the U.S. and in Rome didn't follow his lead and enact any such policy. A 2004 report from a National Review Board of lay Catholics chosen by the bishops defined the roles of some bishops in tolerating felonious behavior: "Although the fact that approximately 4 percent of clergy have sexually abused minors outrages and saddens the laity, the overwhelming majority of the clergy have led honorable lives of dedication to the church and her people. More distressing to the laity is the inadequate response by bishops and other church leaders to this problem over the last 25 years. . . . Their responses were characterized by moral laxity, excessive leniency, insensitivity, secrecy, and neglect."

The report concluded that numerous church leaders focused primarily on protecting their earthly realms and their accused subordinates. In response, this page concurred that mismanagement by numerous bishops not only had hurt victims of criminal molestation, but had left model priests tarred by the most unfair and diabolical of suspicions: Could he be the one in 25?

Today, George is president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Might this be the time for consequences? Might this be the cardinal's moment?

From *Whispers in the Loggia*. Please continue to support this blog.

Midway through his stay at the Alto Adige seminary, however, the pontiff journeyed to the local cathedral, where he held the latest of his signature Q&A sessions with the clergy of his vacation diocese. The meet-ups invariably include at least one notable quote, and -- with the encounter now translated in full -- this time around the buzz has honed in on B16's response to a priest who, "thinking that in any case it's better not to snuff out the wick of a weak flame," sought pastoral insight on accepting the less-than-fully-

committed for the sacraments:

The Pope's response:

Well, I can't give an infallible answer right now, I can only try to respond based on what I see. I have to say that I've followed a path similar to yours. When I was young I was rather more severe. I said: the sacraments are the sacraments of the faith, and when the faith isn't there, where there's not practice of the faith, the sacraments can't be conferred. When I was Archbishop of Munich I always discussed this with my pastors, and there too there were two factions, one severe and one more generous. I too in the course of time have realized that we have to follow instead the example of the Lord, who was very open also with the people who were at the margins of Israel at that time. He was a Lord of mercy, too open – according to many of the official authorities – with sinners, welcoming them or allowing himself to be welcomed by them at their dinners, drawing them to himself in his communion.

Thus I would say in essence that the sacraments are naturally sacraments of the faith. Where there is no element of faith, where First Communion would just be a party with a big lunch, nice clothes and nice gifts, then it can't be a sacrament of the faith. But, on the other hand, if we can see even a tiny flame of desire for communion in the church, a desire also from these children who want to enter into communion with Jesus, it seems right to me to be rather generous. Naturally, for sure, it must be part of our catechesis to make clear that Communion, First Communion, is not automatic, but it demands a continuity of friendship with Jesus, a path with Jesus. I know that children often have the intention and desire to go to Sunday Mass, but their parents don't make it possible. If we see that the children want it, that they have the desire to go, it seems to me almost a sacrament of desire, the 'vow' of participation at Sunday Mass. In this sense we naturally should do everything possible in the context of sacramental preparation to also reach the parents and – let's say – also awaken in them a sensibility for the path that their children are taking. They should help their children to follow their own desire to enter into friendship with Jesus, which is the form of life, of the future. If the parents have the desire that their children should make the First Communion, this somewhat social desire should be expanded into a religious desire to make possible a journey with Jesus.

I would say, therefore, that in the context of catechism with children, the work with parents is always very important. It's an occasion for meeting the parents, making the life of faith present also to the adults, so that they themselves can learn anew from the children – it seems to me – and to understand that this great solemnity makes sense only, and it's true and authentic only if, it's realized in the context of a journey with Jesus, in the context of a life of faith. The challenge is to convince the parents a bit, through the children, of the necessity of a preparatory path, which reveals itself in participation in the mysteries and begins to foster love for those mysteries.

This is a fairly insufficient response, I would say, but the pedagogy of the faith is always a journey, and we have to accept today's situation, but we also have to open it up little by little, so that it's not directed at the sole aim of some exterior memory of things, but so that the heart is truly touched. In the moment in which we become convinced, the heart is

touched, it's felt a bit of the love of Jesus, and it's experienced a bit of desire to move in this direction. In that moment, it seems to me, we can say that we've accomplished a real catechesis. The true sense of catechesis, in fact, should be this: to carry the flame of the love of Jesus, even if it's small, to the hearts of children, and through the children to their parents, thereby opening anew the places of the faith in our time.

Finally, from *The Economist* Aug 7, 2008

Anyone for Schadenfreude? What Roman Catholics fear from an Anglican split

THE Archbishop of Canterbury was not the only church leader to be thankful that the Lambeth conference ended with the Anglican Communion still in one piece. An almost audible sigh of relief could be heard from the Vatican.

"The last thing the pope would wish to do is support any kind of division," said Keith Pecklers, a Jesuit professor of Liturgy at the Gregorian University in Rome. That may seem odd. If the Church of England splits, Catholicism stands to gain new adherents. Traditionally minded Anglican priests and bishops—and, in some cases, most of their flocks—can be expected to defect to Rome.

One reason why senior Catholic clerics view a possible schism with dismay is personal and emotional. As the Second Vatican Council's decree on ecumenism noted, the Anglican Communion occupies a "special place" in relation to the Catholic church. In the 44 years since then, many Catholics have invested time, effort and prayer in trying to reunite with the Church of England, and there have been moments when they dared to hope it was possible. Good friendships and working relationships have been formed along the way (one is between Rowan Williams and the Archbishop of Westminster, Cormac Murphy-O'Connor). No one likes to hear a row in a friend's house.

But there are other, less sentimental reasons why the Catholic hierarchy dreads a split. In particular, the acceptance into the Catholic church of large numbers of married Anglican clerics would make it harder for the Vatican to hold its already shaky line on priestly celibacy. Since 1980, when rules were drawn up for the reception of Anglican clerics (some of whom were unhappy at the prospect of women priests in their Communion), more than 80 have taken the leap worldwide. Most are married. Catherine Pepinster, the editor of a liberal Catholic weekly, the *Tablet*, says that in Britain most Catholics feel that these priests "bring something beneficial to their ministry. They understand people's married lives, and that is appreciated."

The refugees from any future schism could prove far more numerous than the trickle who have eloped to Rome to date, however. So those Roman Catholics who would welcome a more tolerant attitude towards homosexuality, or the greater involvement of women, could see their cause set back by the arrival of the rebels. "High" Anglicans can be more papist than the pope. As Ms. Pepinster notes, their services can contain "more smells and bells than you would find in the average Catholic parish".