

Although most of this article focuses on the Irish sex abuse scandal, the part I found most interesting was the early section that dealt with the Pope's interpretation of church and the Council. The rest of the article can be found at *Beyond Chron, the Voice of the Rest*.

BENEDICT XVI INAUGURATES DIOCESAN CONGRESS OF ROME

VATICAN CITY, 27 MAY 2009 (VIS) - Yesterday evening in the basilica of St. John Lateran, cathedral of Rome, Benedict XVI inaugurated the ecclesial congress of the diocese of Rome. The congress, which is due to last until 29 May, has as its theme: "Church membership and pastoral co-responsibility".

On his arrival the Holy Father was welcomed by Cardinal Agostino Vallini, papal vicar general for the diocese of Rome. In his address, the Pope called on ecclesial moments to work in harmony with the diocese, with "a true sense of belonging to the Church", and highlighted the need for a redoubling of commitment on the part of lay people, who are called "not merely to be collaborators of the clergy" but to shoulder their own specific responsibilities in the life of the Church.

He then dwelt on various erroneous tendencies such as that of tending to identify the Church with her hierarchy while forgetting that, in fact, everyone is part of her "from the Pope to the most recently baptised", or that of conceiving of the People of God in sociological and political terms, while overlooking the novelty of the Church.

In this context, Benedict XVI spoke of the good fruits of Vatican Council II, and rejected those forms of interpretation that consider the Council as a break in the continuity of Church tradition.

The Pope invited young people "to experience the beauty of being Church" in a world where individualism reigns and a sense of belonging is being lost. He also suggested the creation of missionary groups in the workplace, where many people spend most of their time, and highlighted the need for "adequate pastoral care on environment issues".

Recalling then how many baptised people do not feel they form part of the ecclesial community and that few lay people, though they call themselves Catholic, are ready to work in the various fields of pastoral activity, the Holy Father encouraged pastors to favour a climate of spiritual and apostolic growth in their flock and to reach out to the population of Rome. ...

The following article by Deacon Keith Fournier appeared on Catholic Online on May 29.

Beyond Liberal and Conservative: Catholic Must Become the Noun

Just as there is a hierarchy of truths in Catholic theology we need to develop a hierarchy of values for our political participation.

CHESAPEAKE, Va. - On January 20, 2003 Peggy Noonan (Wall Street Journal) wrote an editorial entitled "A Tough Roe: Will the Democratic Party be abortion's final victim." The thrust of her editorial was that the Democratic Party had lost its soul, was losing its

numbers and was on the way to irrelevancy for decades to come. Wow! How volatile American party politics truly is.

Other editorialists are now saying the same thing about the Republican Party. It really does not matter which of the major political parties is on the ropes. If we are to advance in our mission to build a new “culture of life” and a “civilization of love” Catholics must become the conscience of both parties while not captive or beholden to either.

Our adversaries accuse us of being “single issue.” They are wrong. Our insistence upon recognition in the positive law of the dignity of every human person from conception throughout the entirety of life is the framework through which we evaluate every issue. Nor is our Pro-Life position simply a matter of our “religious” beliefs. It is a response to the truth revealed by the Natural Law and confirmed by medical science. Our faith and the revelation upon which it is grounded give us further insights into the source of that Natural Law and call us to an even greater obligation to insist upon its role in the formation of the positive law.

The child in the womb, the disabled, the needy and the elderly are all members of our human family and we must never condone their killing. It is not a choice but a crime, whether the positive law recognizes it yet or not. Rights are not ethereal concepts floating around in the cosmos somewhere. They are goods of the human person. Our opposition to the judicial manufacture of a “right” to take innocent human life in the womb must never take a back seat to any other concern in the public policy arena.

However, abortion, in the words of the late Servant of God John Paul II, is only the “cutting edge of the culture of death.” Any time human persons are treated as “products” to be used, aborted, discarded, manipulated, enslaved, traded, made a means rather than an end.... there we find the “culture of death.” We must expose, oppose and replace it. When abortion is illegal we will have much more work to do in our task of helping to build a truly just and more human society.

Catholics will be judged the most severely if we fail to act. The Biblical adage should echo in our ears, “To those, to whom much is given, much more will be required!” We are living under what Pope Benedict XVI rightly warned of a “Dictatorship of Relativism” in the West. The culture stumbles, drunken on the false notion of freedom as a “right” to kill the innocent and divorced from any acknowledgement of norms to guide the exercise of human choice and govern our behavior. When there is a wholesale effort to deny the existence of anything objectively true which can be known by all and form the basis of our common life, there is no real freedom. Rather, we teeter on the brink of anarchy.

There are questions we should ask ourselves. Do we believe in the existence of such truths? Do we seek to live our lives according to them? Do we apply them in the exercise of our citizenship? Is Catholic the Noun in our political participation? The Social Doctrine of the Church offers principles which are needed by all in this difficult time. In their “Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life” the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared: “It is a question of the lay Catholic’s duty to be morally coherent, found within one’s conscience, which is one and indivisible. ‘There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence: on the one hand, the so-called ‘spiritual life’, with its values and demands; and on the other, the so-called ‘secular’ life, that is, life in a family, at work, in social responsibilities, in the responsibilities of public life and in culture.’”

Catholic is the Noun.

My political and policy work over more than three decades has involved working with folks who act as though “Catholic” is an adjective. They are “Catholic” conservatives. Or they are “Catholic” liberals, or “Catholic” Republicans or “Catholic” Democrats. I insist that Catholic must be the Noun and NOT an adjective. You cannot fit faithful Catholics who have read, prayed through and seek to apply the principles found in Catholic Social Thought in any of the categories of “left” or “right”, “liberal” or “conservative” or hyphenated versions of any of them. Nor do I believe that either major party should have a “lock” on our support. Both major parties have failed us miserably.

On the predominant human rights issue of our age the leadership of the Democratic Party has left behind all who insist upon the preeminent right to life. One simply cannot be a faithful Catholic and what is euphemistically now called “pro-choice.” I, like many of my fellow Catholic Americans, grew up equating being Catholic with being a Democrat because I thought Democrats cared more about the poor, the working class, the marginalized and those with no voice. I was wrong. The elite of the Democratic Party have embraced a notion of “freedom” as a power over others and “choice” as a right to do whatever one wants. The failure to hear the cry of the child in the womb is an example of unbridled hypocrisy and selectively caring about some poor. Medical science has confirmed what our conscience has always known, that child in the womb is one of us. His or her voice cannot be heard because it is muffled in the once hallowed home of the womb and disregarded by political opportunists.

However, the Republican Party has not fared well on defending and placing in the positive law protection for the Right to Life even if the Right is acknowledged in their platform. They talk a good talk. They sometimes earn the stereotype used by their opponents that they care about children only when they are in the womb. Some Republicans seem to favor a “survival of the fittest” approach to the market economy which does not recognize our obligations in human solidarity. I had hoped for new voices proposing a public policy that acknowledges our special responsibility for the poor and offers an expanded vision for participation in the market economy. It has not happened. Though “big government” solutions have arguably not worked well in the delivery of charity the Republican Party has failed to present a new approach to empowering the mediating associations to deliver that charity. Instead they decry centralized economic planning and warn about the growth of the Federal Government when they caused much of that growth when they were in power. Finally, some are espousing a “libertarianism” that cares little about our social obligations to one another. I had hoped they would affirm the truth that markets were made for man (and woman) and not man for the market while rejecting overly controlled economic models and big Government. Instead they grouse and talk and grouse and talk.

Catholics must not be viewed by either Party as one more “interest group” in their tent which can be polled, pandered to and bought. We are to be the “soul of the world”, humanizing, transforming and elevating human society, a prophetic voice. Our social obligation is to promote the true common good, not just use the slogan to sound “catholic” as happened in the last political cycle. We need to promote the truth as taught by the Church no matter what it is labeled in the political parlance of the hour. Our political participation is rooted in our baptismal vocation and geared toward serving the true common good by promoting human life and dignity, marriage and the family,

authentic human freedom, solidarity with the needy and authentic peace.

Our best response is to build a model of political participation which stands outside of both major parties and seeks to influence them. There are MANY issues in the political arena where faithful Catholics can-and do-differ. We must live and act politically as if *Catholic is the Noun*. We are not first “conservatives”, or “liberals”, “left” or “right”, Democrat or Republican, we are Catholics. Just as there is a hierarchy of truths in Catholic theology, we need to develop a hierarchy of values for political participation. The Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church has great relevancy for our public policy efforts including respect for life, authentic freedom, human rights, current economic issues, justice issues, marriage and the family, our stewardship of the environment, the use and humanizing of technology and the relationships between nations. It is time we really began to read it, pray through it and apply it to building a new Catholic Action. In our political participation, Catholic must become the Noun.

I know, too much Fr. Reese. But he is everywhere. And he is good. The following is a study of trends in the American Catholic Church.

Las Nuevas Caras de American Catolicismo THIS CATHOLIC'S VIEW

By Thomas J. Reese, S.J.

It has become a cliché to say that Hispanics are the future of the Catholic Church in America. Their numbers are growing because of immigration and births, while white Catholics are having fewer children and are leaving the church in great numbers. One out of three Catholics has left the church according to a study by the Pew Forum. The only reason Catholics continue to be a stable percentage of the U.S. population is that Hispanics are making up for the white Catholics who are leaving.

Hispanics were also a key factor in the election of Barack Obama as president. George Bush had been successful in wooing Hispanics. Bush spoke Spanish, was reasonable on immigration reform and understood their concerns since he had been governor of Texas.

But in 2008, Hispanics went overwhelmingly (67%) for Obama, 16 percentage points more than voted for John Kerry in 2004. Although John McCain was reasonable on immigration reform, Republican Party activists alienated Hispanics with their anti-immigrant rhetoric. Hispanics obviously ignored the bishops who attacked Obama. Polls show that they continue to support him.

This week, Obama reached into the Hispanic Catholic community for two important appointments, the most prominent being the nomination of Sonia Sotomayor to the U.S. Supreme Court. A less prominent nomination is that of Miguel Diaz, a Cuban American Catholic, as ambassador to the Holy See. Diaz is a professor of theology at St. John's University and a member of the board of the Catholic Theological Society of America. Sotomayor's legal qualifications are unquestionable: Yale Law School, New York City prosecutor, corporate lawyer, District Court judge and Appellate Court judge. The child of Puerto Rican immigrants, she, like Obama, lived the American dream. If the

Republican Party attacks her, it may further alienate Hispanics from the party. Although her position on abortion is not yet known, she did uphold the Bush administration's right to deny federal funds to overseas organizations that provided or referred clients for abortions, which will make it difficult to paint her as a pro-abortion radical.

Diaz, a respected scholar, recently taught courses in "Trinity, Faith and Revelation" and "Christian Anthropology." He is author of *On Being Human: U.S. Hispanic and Rahnerian Perspectives* and co-editor of *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*.

He is obviously not your usual ambassadorial appointment. He is neither a big donor nor a politician although he did campaign for Obama. Jim Martin, S.J., associate editor of *America*, has already fantasized that "he and the Holy Father can have some lively Rahner-Balthasar discussions."

While his Catholic and theological background will help him understand the Vatican, he does not represent the Catholic community or Catholic theologians to the Vatican. He will represent the Obama administration and the U.S. Government.

Like any ambassador, he will have to be a quick study, but at least he will not have to worry about military alliances, trade or arrested Americans. His job will be pure diplomacy. His familiarity with Catholic social teaching will allow him to be sensitive to the areas where there will be agreement and friction. There are lots of areas of agreement: nuclear disarmament, poverty reduction, peace, refugees, etc. Sotomayor and Diaz may truly be the new face of the Catholic Church in America, and Obama wisely wants them to contribute to the image and reality of his administration

From the *Washington Post*, On Faith.

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