

**Why can't the American Catholic Church follow the example of the Vatican in addressing those issues where the Church disagrees with the American administration and recognizing those issues where the Church and the administration stand in agreement? Why does it have to be "all or nothing"?**

Pope meets new US envoy, praises Obama  
By FRANCES D'EMILIO (AP)

VATICAN CITY — Pope Benedict XVI pledged on Friday that the U.S. Catholic church will keep working to shape American consciences on ethical questions such as abortion as he praised the United States for its "vibrant" democracy.

He told new U.S. Ambassador Miguel H. Diaz, a university theology professor who is a Roman Catholic, that he was confident the two sides would continue to enjoy "fruitful dialogue and cooperation in the promotion of human rights, and the service of justice, solidarity and peace."

Vatican teaching forbids abortion, and some Catholic bishops have threatened to withhold Communion from Catholic politicians who support legalized abortion.

President Barack Obama is pro-choice but the Vatican welcomes many of the new U.S. administration's other initiatives and Benedict praised Obama's recent efforts at the U.N. Security Council to work toward a "goal of a world free of nuclear weapons."

Diaz, presenting his credentials to the pope in a ceremony in the Apostolic Palace, hailed Benedict for emphasizing "moral imperatives."

Benedict endorsed American Catholics efforts to be vocal about their faith's teaching on public issues.

"The church in the United States wishes to contribute to the discussion of the weighty ethical and social questions shaping America's future by proposing respectful and reasonable arguments grounded in natural law and confirmed by the perspective of faith," the pontiff said.

The U.S. church contributes through "the formation of consciences" particularly on issues regarding "the inalienable right to life from the moment of conception to natural death," Benedict said. "Conception to natural death" is a phrase the Vatican frequently uses to refer to abortion and euthanasia.

The church also needed to speak out clearly on behalf of the "right to conscientious objection" by health-care workers "and indeed all citizens" on moral issues like abortion, Benedict said.

Benedict said that when he visited the United States last year he found a "vibrant democracy, committed to the service of the common good and shaped by a vision of equality and equal opportunity based on the God-given dignity and freedom of each human being."

While not commenting directly on Obama's uphill battle with the U.S. Congress to guarantee health care to all Americans, Benedict cited "basic health care" along with

secure access to food and water among a spectrum of global issues "linked to the future of humanity and the promotion of human dignity."

Other similarly vital priorities in the pontiff's view were "just policies" on trade and immigration, including matters involving families.

Hispanics make up a large segment of the U.S. Catholic population, and the Havana-born Diaz is the first Hispanic to serve Washington as envoy to the Holy See.

The ambassador told Benedict that his "urgent priorities" including efforts to combat climate change, ensure food security and find an ethical response to the financial crisis "coincide with those set forth by President Obama."

Obama's receipt of an honorary degree from the Catholic University of Notre Dame this year provoked criticism from dozens of Catholic bishops because Obama supports legalized abortion.

Benedict warmly welcomed Obama at the Vatican in July when the U.S. leader came to Italy for the G-8 summit. He told Diaz he recalled that meeting "with pleasure" and asked him to reciprocate "the kind greetings which you bring from him."

In his speech Friday, Benedict appeared to allude to the election of Obama as America's first black president when he said recent U.S. "reaffirmation" of the country's tradition of diversity "recaptured the imagination of the world."

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**The Catholic apologist Frank Sheed once said:**

"We are not baptized into the hierarchy; do not receive the cardinals sacramentally; will not spend an eternity in the beatific vision of the pope. Christ is the point. I, myself, admire the present pope, but even if I criticized him as harshly as some do, even if his successor proved to be as bad as some of those who have gone before, even if I find the Church, as I have to live with it, a pain in the neck, I should still say that nothing that a pope (or a priest) could do or say would make me wish to leave the Church, although I might well wish that they would leave."

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"One of the most important things in life is what judge Learned Hand described as 'that ever-gnawing inner doubt as to whether you're right.' If you don't have that, if you think you've got an inside track to absolute truth, you become doctrinaire, humorless and intellectually constipated. The greatest crimes in history have been perpetrated by such religious and political and racial fanatics, from the persecutions of the Inquisition on down to Communist purges and Nazi genocide." **Saul Alinsky**

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**An excerpt from an October 8 Op-ed piece from the *New York Times*.**

**The Politics of Spite**  
**Paul Krugman**

There was what President Obama likes to call a teachable moment last week, when the International Olympic Committee rejected Chicago's bid to be host of the 2016 Summer Games.

"Cheers erupted" at the headquarters of the conservative Weekly Standard, according to a blog post by a member of the magazine's staff, with the headline "Obama loses! Obama loses!" Rush Limbaugh declared himself "gleeful." "World Rejects Obama," gloated the Drudge Report. And so on.

So what did we learn from this moment? For one thing, we learned that the modern conservative movement, which dominates the modern Republican Party, has the emotional maturity of a bratty 13-year-old.

But more important, the episode illustrated an essential truth about the state of American politics: at this point, the guiding principle of one of our nation's two great political parties is spite pure and simple. If Republicans think something might be good for the president, they're against it — whether or not it's good for America. ...

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**And Moveon.org was excoriated for questioning the loyalty of General Petraeus**

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**Media Matters: Right again makes an anti-American ass of itself following Obama's Nobel win**

On Friday, the nation awoke to the news that the Nobel Peace Prize had been awarded to President Barack Obama. "I am both surprised and deeply humbled," Obama said that morning. "I do not view it as a recognition of my own accomplishments, but rather as an affirmation of American leadership...I will accept this award as a call to action."

But sadly, Obama's words failed to touch the hearts of some of the world's most esteemed and principled critics and commentators, all of whom have proven their love for America and her values time and again. I'm kidding of course.

After resolutely working to undermine Chicago's bid for the 2016 Olympic Games and then roundly applauding the International Olympic Committee's decision to eliminate the U.S. city from competition, the right-wing media responded with furor to the Nobel Committee's decision. "I did not realize the Nobel Peace Prize had an affirmative action quota," wrote Erick Erickson at the conservative RedState, who just last week had laughed at the idea that Obama had improved America's standing in the world.

"He's sided with Marxists Castro, Chavez, Morales and Ortega. ... Obama's bankrupted the US economy and destroyed the morale of our military," chimed in Gateway Pundit, another right-wing blogger. "No wonder he was awarded the Nobel." A poll question on Lou Dobbs' website expressed shock at the fact that the award had gone to "Our Supreme Leader." *Fox & Friends* co-host Brian Kilmeade (the brown-haired-guy-who-isn't-Steve-Doocy) suggested that Obama had delayed making a decision to send more troops to Afghanistan in order to win the award, even though the White House said it was unaware that Obama had even been nominated. "The World Apology Tour yields

dividends," succinctly wrote prominent right-wing blogger and Fox News contributor Michelle Malkin.

Indeed, the idea that Obama had been rewarded for deliberately weakening the United States was soon a central theme from the right. "They [the Nobel Committee] love a weakened, neutered U.S, and this is their way of promoting that concept," radio host Rush Limbaugh said in an email to *Politico*. "Obama did make a big show of appeasing Iran during its election crisis," added conservative blogger Ed Morrissey. "Perhaps they should change the award's name to the Neville rather than the Nobel."

The volume emanating from the right quickly impacted more mainstream reporters. *Time's* Simon Robinson penned an online piece explaining how the award could prove politically harmful to the president, and Nancy Gibbs wrote a widely circulated article for *Time* as well, this one explaining why the Nobel was "the last thing [Obama] needs." She's right... we all know the Nobel Prize is something that should be avoided, you know, like cancer. Sigh.

It wasn't long before the calls started for Obama to turn down the award, from a variety of sources. Malkin, CBS' Chip Reid, *Time's* Mark Halperin, John Bolton, Slate.com's Mickey Kaus, *The Weekly Standard's* Mary Katharine Ham, and *The Atlantic's* Jeffery Goldberg all echoed the theme, among others.

"[H]e has to turn it down -- because it is such a joke -- that he'll turn it down and it's the only way for him make a win out of this," said Fox News' Glenn Beck. "Only his arrogance will stop him from doing it." For his part, Beck had an explanation for what was really going on, as well as a suggestion for who Obama could hand the award over to.

"These progressives are extraordinarily powerful," he explained, channeling conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. "And this campaign of Barack Obama, this global campaign for Barack Obama, is done by global interests that have extraordinary power. They're very well connected."

In what had to be a highlight of his lunacy, Beck continued: "The Nobel Peace Prize should be turned down by Barack Obama and given -- you ready for this? Oh, this one's gonna make headlines -- should be given to the Tea Party goers and the 9-12 Project." This makes sense, seeing as that the undeniable currents of racism, violence, and xenophobia the Tea Party "movement" embodies represent the very essence of what Alfred Nobel's prize is all about. Sigh, again.

But at the end of the day, it was El Rushbo who really made headlines. It turned out that the Taliban was also against the Nobel Committee's decision, something that didn't give Limbaugh a moment's pause.

"I think that everybody is laughing" he said. "Our president is a worldwide joke. Folks, do you realize something has happened here that we all agree with the Taliban and Iran about and that is he doesn't deserve the award. Now that's hilarious, that I'm on the

same side of something with the Taliban, and that we all are on the same side as the Taliban." ...

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**Your articles and comments are deeply appreciated, and are necessary to keep the conversation going. Please send them to [tony@tonyercolano.com](mailto:tony@tonyercolano.com)**