

CHRISTIANITY ON TRIAL

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I. THE FACE OF CATHOLICISM IN POLITICS

We will always need good, ethical Catholic lawyers. This is especially the case now, since, as I am sure you all have noticed, Christianity in general and the Catholic Church in particular often find themselves on trial in the United States.

Let me give you an example that struck close to home. In Connecticut, just eight months ago, several legislators essentially found the Church guilty, and proceeded directly to sentencing. They introduced a bill to strip priests and bishops of their administrative roles in parishes and dioceses, and turn those responsibilities over to lay trustees.¹

New York had tried this once before, and had even succeeded in the 1850s—under the Know-Nothing party—whose name adequately describes their knowledge of constitutional law.

In Connecticut, Catholics from throughout the state rallied to their Church. Embarrassed by the public outcry, the legislators withdrew the bill.

It was really the only legal outcome imaginable. Even a first-year law student can see that if the Establishment and Free Exercise Clauses mean anything they prevent government from stepping in to re-organize church structures in order to restrict the authority of clergy with whom they disagree.

After all, the First Amendment isn't *that* hard to find, even in Connecticut, "the Constitution State."

[†] Carl Anderson, the thirteenth and current Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus, gave this address at the Ave Maria School of Law's grand opening celebration on Nov. 13, 2009 to recognize the law school's move from Ann Arbor, Mich., to Naples, Fla.

1. See An Act Modifying Corporate Laws Relating to Certain Religious Corporations S. 1098, 2009 Gen. Assemb., Jan. Sess. (Conn. 2009), available at <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/TOB/S/2009SB-01098-R00-SB.htm>.

II. MASTERS OF SUSPICION

But why would such a bill even be proposed today? Why would a church face such a trial? I would suggest that it is because there is a growing influence within certain social elites that views Christianity not as a positive force for good, but as a social pathology—something akin to drug dealing.

This suspicion about Christianity goes back more than a century, at least to the time of Karl Marx, who called religion “the opium of the people.”² Marx then made what he thought was the only reasonable response—remove religion and its influence from society.³

Marx wasn’t the only one.

Another was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche famously declared that God was dead, and described Christianity as a slave religion that “crushed and shattered man completely.”⁴ One might describe the effects of heavy drug use in the same way.

Another was Sigmund Freud. Freud frequently called religion an illusion, even a “universal obsessional neurosis,” attributing to religion something akin to addictive and hallucinogenic properties.⁵

No wonder the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur called these three icons of modern secular thought the “three masters of suspicion,” because they were able to place the entire Judeo-Christian patrimony of Western Civilization on trial.⁶ But it is a trial which we might recognize from Alice in Wonderland since in this case Christianity is guilty until proven innocent.⁷

And while these three “masters” are no longer with us, their methodology remains and continues its influence in such best-selling books as *The God Delusion*⁸ which have done much to foster what we might describe today as an emerging *Culture of Suspicion*.

This culture has had a devastating impact on the formation of the religious conscience and, in particular, the Catholic conscience.

2. KARL MARX, *Toward the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law: Introduction*, in WRITINGS OF THE YOUNG MARX ON PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY 249, 251 (D. Easton & Kurt H. Guddat eds. & trans., 1967) (emphasis omitted).

3. *See id.*

4. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN 85 (Marion Faber & Stephen Lehmann trans., Univ. of Neb. Press 1984) (1878).

5. SIGMUND FREUD, *The Future of an Illusion*, in THE FREUD READER 685, 713 (Peter Gay ed., 1989).

6. *See* PAUL RICOEUR, FREUD AND PHILOSOPHY 32–33 (Denis Savage trans., 1970).

7. *See* LEWIS CARROLL, ALICE’S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND 183 (1911).

8. RICHARD DAWKINS, THE GOD DELUSION (2006).

In fact, we might well ask whether the suppression of religious conscience is becoming the norm—in family, law, business, medicine, social services, immigration, and art.

This is the root cause of the rise of secularism and relativism, as well as for phenomena like the de-Christianization of Europe. Because if religion generally is viewed with suspicion, then conscience—which enables us to adhere to our religious belief—is viewed with suspicion as well.

And in the long history of Western Civilization the two pillars upon which conscience has been supported are traditional Judeo-Christian values and the natural law—which as we know is that universal law inscribed in the heart of man.

A Culture of Suspicion sees in these two pillars the consistency that makes possible a moral compass that is constant and enduring. And it is this moral compass which is the primary obstacle to a political and cultural agenda which seeks to eliminate God wherever possible.

III. AMERICAN SECULARISM

But as we are well aware the influence of secularism is not an influence completely separate or outside of the Christian community.

Indeed, not all Christians have seen secularization as a bad thing.

In 1964, a Baptist minister and professor at Harvard Divinity School named Harvey Cox wrote his own blueprint for Christians in a secular world. He entitled his book, amicably enough, *The Secular City*.⁹ To Professor Cox, secularization was something positive, an emancipation *liberating* man “from religious and metaphysical tutelage,” even as part of a divine plan which Christians must embrace.¹⁰ He even encouraged that we begin to speak of God in secular terms.

This is essentially what Pope Benedict warned against when he came to the United States last year.¹¹ He spoke of a distinctly *American* brand of secularism.¹² Obviously, this is a complex subject.

9. HARVEY COX, *THE SECULAR CITY: SECULARIZATION AND URBANIZATION IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE* (1965).

10. *See id.* at 17.

11. *See* Pope Benedict XVI, Address at White House (Apr. 16, 2008), in *Bringing Renewal and Hope for U.S. Catholics and All People of Goodwill*, L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO (English ed.), Apr. 17–23, 2008, at 2; Pope Benedict XVI, Responses to Questions Posed by the Bishops (Apr. 16, 2008), in *Working for the New Evangelization to Bear Fruit in American Church Life*, L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO (English ed.), Apr. 17–23, 2008, at 5.

12. Pope Benedict XVI, Responses to Questions Posed by the Bishops, *supra* note 11.

But essentially, as a cultural force, secularism in America allows room for faith, but restricts it in ordinary life and especially in public life to a faith that passively accepts truth as remote, *without* practical relevance, with the result that those who believe in God are nonetheless expected to live in society “as if God did not exist.”¹³

But American secularism didn’t come out of nowhere. We might say that American secularism emerged from the gradual but persistent *secular* “evangelization” of the Christian conscience—a process that has blunted the distinctiveness of Christian life, turning it into something amorphous and in too many ways indistinguishable from other lifestyles.

IV. CATHOLIC WITNESS AND THE BENEDICT PROJECT

We saw this influence in Connecticut’s lay trusteeism bill.

Its ever-so-careful wording protected clergy *solely* regarding religious tenets and practices, allowing them only advisory roles in other areas, including such basic tasks as “[d]eveloping outreach programs and other services to be provided to the community”¹⁴

In other words, it sought to force clergy out of the public square and into a ghetto. Priests would be permitted to speak from the pulpit, but they could no longer oversee a soup kitchen. It meant *faith*, but not *works*.

So how then does a faithful Catholic confront the challenges of secularism? Or in the words of Cardinal Ratzinger, “How can Christianity become a positive force in politics without being exploited politically and, conversely, without usurping the political sphere?”¹⁵

I would suggest that Catholics can do this by continuing what the French philosopher Jacques Maritain called one of the great accomplishments of Christianity in modern society—namely, by continuing the Christian evangelization of the secular conscience.¹⁶

But in order to do *that*, we must first recognize the need to re-evangelize the Christian conscience. The way we do this is first and foremost by *witness*—in other words, by showing precisely how a distinctly Christian life is actually lived.

13. *Id.*

14. S. 1098 § 1(e)(5), 2009 Gen. Assemb., Jan. Sess. (Conn. 2009), available at <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/TOB/S/2009SB-01098-R00-SB.htm>.

15. JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER, CHURCH, ECUMENISM, AND POLITICS 203 (Michael J. Miller et al. trans., 2008).

16. See JACQUES MARITAIN, CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRACY 27–37 (Doris C. Anson trans., Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press 1946).

Rather than becoming little secularists, living lives indistinguishable from secular life, we must live the distinctiveness of Christianity, being sensitive to reality, responsive to its needs, and faithful to the truth.

For what is *distinctive* about Christian life is what truly will give *hope* to the world.

This is a major theme of Pope Benedict's writings, especially in his three encyclicals which form nothing less than a beautiful trilogy on the Christian life whose foundation is faith, hope, and charity.¹⁷ In some ways, we could even call this the "Benedict Project"—the central concern of his pontificate and his pastoral ministry.

His first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, describes how Christian love is different from secular social work.¹⁸ The Christian—like Christ himself—has an approach that is *personalist* rather than *utilitarian*, caring about each person as a "subject" and not treating him as an object.¹⁹

And like Christ's own love, this love is also personal in that it is *worthy* of the person; it is a *total* gift of *self* for which there is no political or legal substitute.²⁰ As Pope Benedict wrote:

Love—*caritas*—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such. . . . The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern.²¹

This personalist view of love is the foundation of all human interaction. In his latest encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict explained how Christian social response and economic action are different from secular ones, because Christian response and action must be centered upon respect for the dignity of the human person and the gift of self.²²

17. See Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* [Encyclical Letter on Christian Charity] (2009) [hereinafter *Caritas in Veritate*]; Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi* [Encyclical Letter on Christian Hope] (2007) [hereinafter *Spe Salvi*]; Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* [Encyclical Letter on Christian Love] (2006) [hereinafter *Deus Caritas Est*].

18. See *Deus Caritas Est*, *supra* note 17, ¶ 28.

19. *Id.*

20. See *id.*

21. *Id.*

22. See *Caritas in Veritate*, *supra* note 17, ¶ 37.

V. THOMAS MORE AND THE WITNESS TO CONSCIENCE

Indeed, what is needed is not a new theology text book, but a living Christian witness strengthened and directed by an educated moral compass.

Nowhere is this truer than in the legal process governing our great nation.

Today, threats to religious freedom in our country do not come from the muzzle of a gun. They are more subtle threats, and they are more likely to come from laws attacking individual rights of religious conscience.

All Catholics face challenges. And Catholic lawyers face particular challenges. If our increasingly secular culture of suspicion would treat clergy as having the same social status as drug dealers (who must be closely monitored by laws) and would treat religious faithful as having the same social status as drug-addicts (who must be rehabilitated by laws), then what does it mean to be a Catholic lawyer in such a society?

Of course, a Catholic lawyer can become accepted as a “reasonable fellow” in polite, secular society—if he is willing to drive a wedge between his faith and his work.

But this is an incomplete citizenship.

As Pope Benedict said at the United Nations: “It is inconceivable . . . that believers should have to suppress a part of themselves—their faith—in order to be active citizens. It should never be necessary to deny God in order to enjoy one’s rights.”²³

Such a divorce is an unhealthy way for a society to conduct itself.

In his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict said, “All serious and upright human conduct is hope in action.”²⁴ Without a well-formed conscience, what is serious and upright human conduct is anyone’s guess. Take away religion—and its formation of conscience—and you have taken away hope.

This is something that one of our Founding Fathers, John Adams, understood well. He wrote that “[o]ur Constitution was made only

23. Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the United Nations General Assembly (Apr. 18, 2008), in *U.N.: Sign of Unity, Instrument of Service to the Human Family*, L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO (English ed.), Apr. 17–23, 2008, at 13.

24. *Spe Salvi*, *supra* note 17, ¶ 35.

for a moral and religious people” and that “[i]t is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”²⁵

Karol Wojtyla saw the situation in much the same way. He said: “A man who does not respect God eventually will not respect man.”²⁶

Lamentably, lawyers see firsthand in their occupation a microcosm of the fall of rights. Often, some people or groups claiming to be supportive of Christians will invite us to come with them—to settle on their turf—but then exact an unacceptable price.

This is perhaps most clearly exemplified in the insistence that Catholic politicians accept abortion on legal grounds, even if they oppose it on moral grounds.

We can very well take as our own Karol Wojtyla’s words about Poland when he said: “[O]ur society fosters a callousness of conscience.”²⁷

It’s the same crisis faced by St. Thomas More, executed for refusing to sign Henry VIII’s Act of Supremacy. Robert Bolt’s great play about St. Thomas More, *A Man for All Seasons*, dramatizes the struggle of conscience in a telling scene between More and his friend, the Duke of Norfolk.²⁸

The Duke can’t understand More’s refusal to dismiss his conscience, and asks More to join the other members of the English nobility and agree to the king’s demand for the sake of friendship.²⁹

Thomas More replies: “And when we stand before God, and you are sent to Paradise for doing according to your conscience, and I am damned for *not* doing according to mine, will you come with me, for fellowship?”³⁰

In short, how can we expect those who have failed to take due care of their own conscience to properly care for the consciences of others? We remember Thomas More for his loyalty to his conscience. We remember the Duke of Norfolk—if we remember him at all—only as More’s foil, as the man who for fellowship’s sake

25. Letter from John Adams to the Officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts (Oct. 11, 1798), in 9 THE WORKS OF JOHN ADAMS 228, 229 (Charles Francis Adams ed., Boston, Little, Brown & Co. 1854).

26. Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, Homily for the Feast of the Epiphany (Jan. 6, 1977), in THE MAKING OF THE POPE OF THE MILLENNIUM 737, 737 (Kazimierz Chwalek ed., Irena & Thaddeus Mirecki et al. trans., 2000).

27. Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, Homily for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (June 6, 1975), in THE MAKING OF THE POPE OF THE MILLENNIUM, *supra* note 26, at 655.

28. See ROBERT BOLT, A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS 128–32 (Vintage Books 1990) (1960).

29. *Id.* at 132.

30. *Id.* (emphasis added).

was willing to give up that which makes true fellowship possible: the integrity of conscience.

But the Duke was not a bad man; in fact he was More's friend and he wanted to help him. But at the decisive moment he was unable to really help his friend because of his failure to care for his own conscience.

VI. POLITICAL PRESSURES

But what happens when decisions based on fellowship rather than on conscience become the norm?

This already is the case, in many areas. In the same way that fellowship is impossible unless it is guided by conscience, we read in Benedict's latest encyclical that charity is not truly possible when it is divorced from the truth.³¹ If this is so, what are we to say about justice when it is divorced from the truth?

Well, if truth is not the primary motivation for a lawyer, then what is? Unfortunately, too often the search for truth is overtaken by a nearly endless calculus on behalf of personal benefit.

St. Thomas More is perhaps the most well known example of a saint battling this selfish calculus from within the field—considering that his sentence of death rested upon the perjured testimony of another government official proudly wearing the chain of office of Attorney General for Wales.³²

But there are also more modern, less well known examples—examples such as Blessed Luigi Quattrocchi. Living in Italy in the mid-20th century, he faced the massive social upheavals of National Socialism and Fascism.³³

Quattrocchi was a prominent attorney who eventually became the Deputy Attorney General of Italy.³⁴ But as you can imagine, working for the Italian government before World War II was a challenge. In 1929, Mussolini was the one who presented the Lateran Treaty and before that time had required that every classroom and courtroom in the country would have a crucifix³⁵—a move that was favorable toward Catholic culture.

31. *Caritas in Veritate*, *supra* note 17, ¶ 3.

32. See BOLT, *supra* note 28, at 156–60.

33. *Biographies of Servants of God: 21 October*, L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO (English ed.), Oct. 10, 2001, at 11.

34. *Id.*

35. R. MURRAY THOMAS, RELIGION IN SCHOOLS 112 (2006).

This was the world Quattrocchi lived in. And at first he and his wife Maria supported Mussolini.³⁶ But later, after the dictator's agenda became increasingly clear and after they observed what was going on in Italy, they did what was right—not what was expedient. They ended their support.³⁷

In fact, they ended up housing resistance fighters in their home.³⁸ Then, in 1939, when Mussolini's Minister of Justice offered Quattrocchi the high position of Advocate General of the Italian State, "he refused in order to avoid being associated with the hierarchy of fascism."³⁹ "After the war, [he] . . . played a prominent part in steering Italy's legal institutions back to democracy after Mussolini's fascism."⁴⁰

Some decades later, Quattrocchi and his wife were the first persons to be beatified *together* as a married couple.⁴¹

VII. EMBRACE AND GHETTO

Both St. Thomas More and Blessed Luigi Quattrocchi are examples that offer us an interesting lesson.

Both took a stand.

Both were willing to suffer the consequences of their stand.

Both engaged their conscience on issues, and engaged others. But both also did so with prudence and we might also say with humility.

We should learn from them that taking a conscientious stand means not compromising the truth, but we should also remember that it doesn't mean being brash.

The fact is, brashness may suggest a strong, unwavering stance. But evangelization and witness are not ecclesial versions of might-is-right.

This was something John Paul II warned us about long before becoming Pope. As he put it, "We do not intend to take up evangelization as a counteraction to anti-evangelization" ⁴² He

36. James Francis Cardinal Stafford, Homily in Fatima, Portugal ¶ 3 (July 13, 2006), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_trib_appen_doc_20060713_stafford-fatima2_en.html.

37. *Id.*

38. *Id.*

39. *Id.*

40. 1 PAUL BURNS, BUTLER'S LIVES OF THE SAINTS: SUPPLEMENT OF NEW SAINTS AND BLESSEDS 269 (2005).

41. *Id.* at 268.

42. Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, Presentation on Evangelization as a Topic of Pastoral Ministry in Poland (Jan. 14, 1976), *in* THE MAKING OF THE POPE OF THE MILLENNIUM, *supra* note 26, at 689.

understood clearly that evangelization cannot be understood or carried out as what he described as an “anti-anti-evangelization.”⁴³ He recognized that “[f]or the Church, anti-evangelization is more of a call than a challenge, more a call from God than a challenge from man.”⁴⁴

And a call from God is also a call to love in the truth.

Christianity is rejected by secularists because it is seen as dangerous—as a force that limits freedom and demeans human potential. In this secular view, Christianity’s mere public presence is interpreted as an act of aggression, because *social progress* is equated with independence from religion, and *individual freedom* is equated with liberation from religious conscience.

And the only adequate response on our part is an authentic witness of love.

So we are not called simply to counter, but rather, to *build*.

We are called to build in such a way that it is evident to all that the assumptions of the Culture of Suspicion are wrong.

We are called to build a culture of life, of truth, of justice, of solidarity, of peace.

We are called to build a civilization of love.⁴⁵

Pope Benedict has repeatedly called on Catholics to be a “creative minority,”⁴⁶ who bring to the legal and political debates of our time a voice of conscience and a moral compass.

For this reason, we can truly understand why Cardinal Ratzinger said, “In the long run, neither embrace nor ghetto can solve for Christians the problem of the modern world.”⁴⁷

In other words, neither a regimen of Christianity-as-politics nor a solution that excludes religious dialogue with culture and politics will be successful.

We are called to witness: to be known by our love for one another. This can’t be done in a moral ghetto or a moral vacuum.

Legally, too, both the embrace and the ghetto leave something to be desired. Both see politics as a power greater than Christian love.

43. *Id.*

44. *Id.*

45. *See, e.g.,* CARL ANDERSON, A CIVILIZATION OF LOVE, at xv (2008).

46. Pope Benedict XVI, In-Flight Interview En Route to Prague (Sept. 26, 2009), in *Ethical and Human Dialogue Between Agnostics and Believers*, L’OSSERVATORE ROMANO (English ed.), Sept. 30, 2009, at 4.

47. JOSEPH CARDINAL RATZINGER, PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC THEOLOGY 391 (Sr. Mary Frances McCarthy trans., Ignatius Press 1987) (1982).

We have a distinct advantage in this country in that, read correctly, our First Amendment avoids both the embrace—that is, the establishment of a religion—and the ghetto, restrictions on our free practice of religion.

The fact is, *Catholics* have an obligation to the affairs of this world. But *Catholicism* is neither a social nor political experiment. As Cardinal Ratzinger also wrote, Christianity “has not set its messianic hopes on the political realm.”⁴⁸

Instead of looking to create a “political theology” we should instead be looking to create a “political ethics.”⁴⁹

In seeking to protect religious liberty, we must work so that Christianity adds to the ethical dimension of a state’s politics. It should not be that politics itself is considered an ethical end, but rather that our belief as Christians should make politics more ethical.

CONCLUSION

We can see this in the example of St. Thomas More—someone who answered the call to holiness *through* his service to the law.

And this is precisely where Ave Maria School of Law can make a distinctive and important contribution to the life of our nation.

As Pope Benedict said in Washington, D.C., every Catholic educational institution is first and foremost “a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth.”⁵⁰

Of course, this does not mean that every student must be a Christian or that those who are not Christians must be converted. But it does mean that as a law school, this institution must seek to lead its students to realize that charity, justice, and truth can be expressed and defended through law and government.

It means as well that those lawyers who seek to accomplish such things must realize that they will never be attained without sacrifice and witness.

As Robert Bolt depicts the trial of Thomas More, before the jury retires to reach its verdict More turns to face his prosecutor and says this: “What you have hunted me for is not my actions, but the thoughts of my heart. It is a long road you have opened. For first

48. RATZINGER, CHURCH, ECUMENISM, AND POLITICS, *supra* note 15, at 203.

49. *See id.* at 204.

50. Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Catholic Educators (Apr. 17, 2008), in *Professionalism and Witness are Paramount for All Catholic Educators*, L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO (English ed.), Apr. 17–23, 2008, at 7.

men will disclaim their hearts and presently they will have no hearts. God help the people whose Statesmen walk your road.”⁵¹

The road England walked upon the death of Thomas More has never been an American road. And it will never be an American road if we have members of the legal profession—men and women—with hearts such as Thomas More’s: brave hearts that see both where love is needed and where the demands of justice lead; hearts that in the words of John Paul II “reject the temptation to lethargy and hopelessness, to reliance on the excuses of the past, and easy recourse to useless quarrels”; hearts that can “build together . . . one people, a united society, a better future.”⁵²

This project of building a better future with a creative minority is the very reason that Pope Benedict has called a summit of Catholic politicians to be held at the Vatican early in 2010. He understands that now is the time for Catholic leaders to take a stand, and that now is the time for those who form Catholic leaders to show them the truth and importance of conscientious action. By his action with this summit, the Pope has shown how to build a “creative minority” by reaching out to Catholics, and urging them to follow their consciences in public life.

This project is not a new one for him. In fact, in 2002, while head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he released a document on Catholics in political life, which said:

[T]he Church’s Magisterium does not wish to exercise political power or eliminate the freedom of opinion of Catholics regarding contingent questions. Instead, [the Church] intends—as is its proper function—to instruct and illuminate the consciences of the faithful, particularly those involved in political life, so that their actions may always serve the integral promotion of the human person and the common good.⁵³

This is the American experience from the first. As Pope Benedict pointed out at the White House last year, when he said:

51. BOLT, *supra* note 28, at 157.

52. Pope John Paul II, Homily at the National Stadium of Kingston, Jamaica ¶ 4 (Aug. 10, 1993), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/homilies/1993/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19930810_stadio-kingston_en.html.

53. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life* ¶ 6 (2002), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html.

America's quest for freedom has been guided by the conviction that the principles governing political and social life are intimately linked to a moral order based on the dominion of God the Creator. The framers of this Nation's founding documents drew upon this conviction when they proclaimed the "self-evident truth" that all men are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights grounded in the laws of nature and of nature's God.⁵⁴

Each of us is called to this example. Each of us is called to shape Catholic political leaders of today and tomorrow so that they follow the dictates of a well-formed conscience. That is what Catholic education—whether in the classroom or from the pulpit—is all about.

To see what kind of effect a call to conscience can have, we need only look at the Pope's visit to the U.S., and the fact that one year after his visit, according to our polling, Americans by an almost 2:1 (50% to 29%) margin wanted to hear what he had to say on issues like abortion-life issues.⁵⁵

Couple this with his statements in the United States last year, with the American heritage of rights endowed by the Creator, and then add Americans' strong desire for an accurate moral compass, and suddenly we can see why the American people have been shifting to the pro-life position in poll after poll.⁵⁶

54. Pope Benedict XVI, Address at White House, *supra* note 11, at 2.

55. KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS & MARIST COLLEGE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC OPINION, POPE BENEDICT XVI 11 (Apr. 2009), http://www.kofc.org/un/cmf/resources/Communications/documents/poll_pope_20090517.pdf.

56. *See, e.g.*, KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS & MARIST COLLEGE INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC OPINION, ABORTION IN AMERICA (July 2009), http://www.kofc.org/un/cmf/resources/Communications/documents/poll_abortion_200907.pdf. In May 2009, 49% of Americans were pro-life and 48% pro-choice, as opposed to October 2008 when only 44% of Americans were pro-life versus 50% pro-choice. *Id.* at 2. Interestingly, the data showed that since October 2008 nearly every demographic subgroup had moved toward the pro-life position except for non-practicing Catholics and men under 45 years of age. *Id.* at 3. Independents and liberals showed the greatest shift to the pro-life position since October 2008, while Democrats were slightly less likely to be pro-life now than they were in October 2008. *Id.* at 4; Lydia Saad, *More Americans "Pro-Life" Than "Pro-Choice" for First Time*, GALLUP (May 15, 2009), <http://www.gallup.com/poll/118399/more-americans-pro-life-than-pro-choice-first-time.aspx> (showing that 51% of Americans call themselves pro-life versus 42% pro-choice); THE PEW FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE, SUPPORT FOR ABORTION SLIPS 26 (2009), <http://pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/abortion09/abortion09.pdf> (showing that between October 2008 and April 2009 the numbers dropped from 53% finding that abortion should be legal in all/most cases to only 46% finding it should be legal in all/most cases. Furthermore, during that same time period, the numbers went up from only 40% finding that it should be illegal in all/most cases to 44% finding it should be illegal in all/most cases. Specifically, in April 2009 the numbers were as follows: 18% favored legalized abortion "in all cases," 28% said it should be legal "in most cases," 28% said it should be illegal "in most cases," and 16% said it should be illegal "in all cases").

I believe the Vatican summit will bear similar fruit, and our actions can too, provided we take the Pope's example to heart.

We are called to bring our conscience into public life, to lead by our moral example, by our moral action, and by our demand that our political leadership do the same.

If we do not do this, then—as John Adams warned—our Constitution will prove wholly inadequate to our governance.⁵⁷

But if we do, we will have created Catholic political leaders that have a consistent commitment to Catholic social teaching—and do not pick and choose which elements of that teaching they will follow. That would truly transform politics since principle will then be for practice, not just for platforms.

Thank you very much.

57. Letter from John Adams to the Officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts, *supra* note 25.