

Abortion Politics Resources

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AA.VV. "Catholic and the Political Life." *Origins* 34:12 (2 September 2004): 185; 187-200.

Issue devoted to various bishops' statements on Catholic politicians and abortion. Most of these statements come in the wake of the U.S. bishops June 14-19, 2004 meeting in Denver, which issued a statement on Catholics and the Political Life. Individual statements include those of Most Reverends Dennis Schnurr, the Atlanta, Charleston and Charlotte Bishops, F. Joseph Gossman, Robert Carlson, John Kinney, David Ricken, and Victor Galeone. The bishops exhibit a considerable difference of opinion and practical judgment about how best to proceed in this issue.

Atlanta, Charleston, and Charlotte Bishops [Archbishop John Donoghue, Bishop Robert Baker, and Bishop Peter Jugis]. "A Manifest Lack of Proper Disposition for Holy Communion." *Origins* 34:12 (2 September 2004): 188-189.

States that any Catholic "serving in the public life espousing positions contrary to the teaching of the Church on the sanctity and inviolability of human life, especially those running for or elected to public office, are not to be admitted to holy communion in any Catholic church within our jurisdictions: the Archdiocese of Atlanta, the dioceses of Charleston and Charlotte. Only after reconciliation with the church has occurred, with the knowledge and consent of the local bishop, and public disavowal of former support for procured abortion, will the individual be permitted to approach the sacrament of holy eucharist.

Beal, John. "Holy Communion and Unholy Politics" *America* (21-28 June 2004).

Calls into question some of the efforts of bishops to force Catholic politicians to adopt certain positions vis-a-vis the abortion debate.

Rev. John P. Beal is associate professor, School of Canon Law, The Catholic University of America.

van Beeck, Franz Jozef. "Denying Communion to Politicians: A Theologian Explains Why It's Wrong." *Commonweal* (4 June 2004): 19-21.

This is an excellent article by a Dutch Jesuit theologian, Franz Josef van Beeck, who has lived and taught for most of his professional life at Loyola University in Chicago. It is a very thoughtful piece looking at the issue of using denial of Communion as a means for

trying to force politicians to adopt certain legislative stances. One of the best single articles on this current issue.

Burke, Most Rev. Raymund, D.D. "Prophecy for Justice: Catholic Politicians and Bishops." *America* (21-28 June 2004).

Citing Canon 915 of the Code of Canon Law which requires that those who "obstinately" persevere "in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy Communion" Burke, who is a canon lawyer, argues that this is the canon to apply in the case of Catholic politicians who do not actively oppose laws that support abortion in one way or another. However, Bishop Dennis Schnurr points instead to Canon 912 of the Code which states that "Any baptized person who is not prohibited by law can and must be admitted to holy communion." See Schnurr's "Catholic and the Political Life." *Origins* 34:12 (2 September 2004): 185; 187-188.

Burke is currently archbishop of St. Louis, but while bishop of La Crosse, Wisconsin he denied access to communion to three Catholic politicians in his diocese. One of them, Congressman David Obey, explains his own position in "My Conscience, My Vote" *America* (16-23 August 2004): 8-12.

Callahan, Sidney. "A Pro-life Case against Bush: It's about more than abortion." *Commonweal* 4 June 2004.

Callahan, who states she voted for Bush in 2000 on the basis of his opposition to abortion, explains why she can no longer support him.

Callahan is a psychologist who also writes on contemporary Church moral issues, and is well-known for her strong pro-life/anti-abortion stance.

Carlson, Most Rev. Robert, D.D. "A Well-Informed Faith Life." " *Origins* 34:12 (2 September 2004): 190-192.

While admitting that a particular candidate or political party cannot be endorsed from the pulpit the bishop states that no one can "vote for a politician who is pro-abortion ... and remain Catholic in good standing." Furthermore, in his diocese "those who act in defiance of these fundamental principles of life should not be honored or invited to speak at Catholic colleges, schools or parishes or hold any office such as lector, eucharist minister, usher, parish council member or religious education teacher."

Carlson is Bishop of Sioux Falls, SD.

Galeone, Most Rev. Victor, D.D. "A Pro-Choice Catholic Politician?" " *Origins* 34:12 (2 September 2004): 199-200.

Argues that a proponent of abortion could not be a Catholic in good standing anymore than a racist could be member in good standing of the NAACP and goes on to express the hope that “those candidates who consistently vote in support of abortion have enough integrity to willingly exclude themselves from receiving the eucharist.” Galeone also denies that the same judgment would apply to those Catholic politicians who support the death penalty in contradiction to Church teaching since “the church does not deny that the state continues to have the right to impose the death penalty.”

Galeone is bishop of St. Augustine, FL.

Garvey, John. “Politics or Idolatry? The Limits of Compromise.” *Commonweal* (4 June 2004): 7.

This is a brief article by an Orthodox theologian that calls into question some of the US Bishops selective use of one issue rather than others to deny Communion to certain Catholic politicians.

Gossman, Most Rev. F. Joseph, D.D. “The State of the Soul of Those Presenting Themselves for Communion.” *Origins* 34:12 (2 September 2004): 189-190.

Notes that the November 2002 Congregation for the Faith Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life does not give sanctions against those who may fail to live up to their obligation to oppose laws that might seem to attack human life. Each person has the “personal obligation to examine his or her conscience,” but goes on to note the “long-standing practice in the church not to make a public judgment about the state of the soul of those who present themselves for holy communion” and states that this will continue to be his own position.

Gossman is bishop of Raleigh, N.C.

Grisez, Germain. “Catholic Politicians and Abortion Funding.” *America* (30 August–6 September 2004): 18-19.

Article by Germain Grisez supporting denial of Communion to Catholic politicians who do not oppose laws allowing for abortion choice.

Grisez is a well-known lay professor of moral philosophy and theology at Mt. St. Mary’s in Emmitsburg, MD.

Kalscheur, Gregory A., S.J. “American Catholics and the State: John Courtney Murray on Catholics in a Pluralistic Democratic Society.” *America* (2-9 August 2004): 15-18.

Reflection by Gregory Kalscheur, S.J. on the thought of John Courtney Murray, S.J. and how it might shed light on the debate over bishops using denial of Communion to try and force Catholic politicians to take certain anti-choice stands.

Kalscheur teaches at the Boston College School of Law.

Kinney, Most Rev. John. "Judging Someone Else's Relationship with God." " *Origins* 34:12 (2 September 2004): 192-193.

States that he refuses "to allow the eucharistic liturgy to become politicized. What I mean is that I will not allow holy communion to be used as a weapon in ongoing political and ideological battles. For this reason it is not my intention to reject anyone who comes forward in a respectful manner to receive the body and blood of Christ." While reaffirming the Church's teaching that only those in the state of grace should receive communion, Kinney states that "no human is capable of judging someone else's relationship to God, and that the Church "recognizes that it is for each individual to examine his or her own conscience in this regard," and that he presumes that "those who come forward to receive the body and blood of Christ have done so and honestly believe they are not in the state of grave sin." The bishop goes on to say that while he admires "efforts to preserve the integrity of holy communion, I caution against allowing the communion procession to become an occasion for pointing out the supposed sins of others."

Kinney is bishop of St. Cloud, MN.

Obey, David R. "My Conscience, My Vote." *America* (16-23 August 2004): 8-12.

Obey is one of the politicians denied Communion by then Bishop Raymund Burke of La Crosse, Wisconsin (now Archbishop of St. Louis). Obey explains the complexities of concrete political choices which sometimes led him in conscience to support specific pieces of legislation that contained provisions that accepted abortion. Burke explained his own position in an earlier article in "Catholic Politicians and Bishops," *America* (21-28 June 2004).

Obey has represented Wisconsin's Seventh Congressional District as a Democrat since 1969.

Ricken, Most Rev. David. "Letter to Catholic Politicians and Public Officials." " *Origins* 34:12 (2 September 2004): 193-199.

States that "[i]t seems that the only position a Catholic politician can take if he is to hold public office at all is to renounce allegiance to his Catholic faith, at least in the public exercise of his office." He also goes on to say that the "constitutional question in *Roe v. Wade* has never been examined," and these and similar surprising affirmations seem to call for a special hermeneutic of interpretation. Ricken notes that "[t]yranny always flourishes under cover of law... . Abortion is simply one more form of violence done in the name of someone else's right under the law." Ricken states that the "only honest thing a Catholic politician can do is to uphold the Catholic teachings in his public and private life or not pretend to be a Catholic and declare himself so. If he insists upon holding publicly what is

contrary to the teaching of his church, he should not be surprised if there are public consequences to his action.”

Ricken is bishop of Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Schnurr, Most Rev. Dennis. “Catholic and the Political Life.” *Origins* 34:12 (2 September 2004): 185; 187-188.

Argues for making a careful distinction in terms of assessing formal cooperation with the evil of abortion, noting the different levels of responsibility of those who actively promote and support individual abortions as contrasted with politicians. He also notes Canon 912 of the Code which states that “Any baptized person who is not prohibited by law can and must be admitted to holy communion.” For a contrary view see Archbishop Raymond Burke’s “Catholic Politicians and Bishops,” *America* (21-28 June 2004).

Schnurr is bishop of Duluth, Minnesota.