



*Are church-going Catholics politically conservative?*

*Do Catholics vote as a bloc?*

*Have Catholics abandoned the Democratic Party?*

*Do Catholics do what the bishops tell them?*

A GUIDE TO ELECTION 2002



Beyond  
the Spin

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*Do Catholics do what the bishops tell them?*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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# Executive Summary

**T**he United States ranks third in the world in Catholic population. According to the 2001 Catholic Almanac, there are 63.8 million Catholics in the United States, comprising roughly one-quarter of the electorate. Catholics tend to live in large-population states that cast the highest number of electoral votes in presidential elections. As a result of their ever-changing voting patterns and significant numbers, one of the most sought after group of voters in America is the Roman Catholic community.

The Catholic vote is probably the best example of a swing vote of any identifiable group in the United States. Based on voting patterns, the only group in the electorate that alternates their support from Republican to Democrat is Catholics. The voting behavior of American Catholics suggests that independence and volatility will be its characteristics in the future. A large and crucial portion of Catholic voters will not be firmly tied to either major party—and probably not to a third party, should one develop.

Cultivating the Catholic vote has become a top priority of both the Democratic and Republican Parties, though the Republican Party has been more active in courting voters in a calculated manner. Since the 2000 election, the GOP has tried to attract more churchgoing Catholic voters by stressing moral and religious themes and “compassionate conservatism.” Furthermore, the Bush administration, attempting to develop a Catholic base of the GOP, has named significant numbers of conservative Catholics to highly visible roles within the White House and key agencies.

While Catholic outreach has remained a pivotal priority for Republican strategists in both the 2002 and 2004 elections, the Democratic Party has experienced a growing problem with Catholic voters. Furthermore, the Democratic Party has done very little to maintain its Catholic support base. The Democrats’ prochoice position makes it difficult to reach out publicly to the bishops, and the party has not developed its outreach to liberal Catholic lay people. The Democrats generally believe that their positions on the issues speak for themselves, and while it is true that Democratic themes naturally play to Catholic voters, the Democrats have ceased to be the party of a majority of the nation’s Catholics. However, Republicans have yet to win the support of the Catholic majority.

Although both parties are actively courting the “Catholic vote,” there in fact is no such thing. There is no monolithic Catholic vote, and there never has been. The term “Catholic vote” is less a reference to a religious group than a discussion of people in the country who are identifiable by their cultural characteristics. Despite a certain convergence of views among Catholics—a concern for social justice, a collective dedication to

the value of the family—Catholics do not vote as a bloc. Catholics represent a great racial and national diversity that makes it impossible to vote in lock step.

Although reproductive health issues are not a primary concern of Catholic voters, the bishops have consistently claimed otherwise. Catholics' views on reproductive health issues are often distorted and misrepresented by the church, understandably confusing candidates and policymakers about what is spin and what is reality. Polls have consistently shown that the majority of Catholics disagree with the bishops on issues of reproductive health and believe that reproductive health care should be legal and accessible, even in Catholic medical facilities. Catholics support contraception and family planning, emergency contraception, stem cell research and abortion, mirroring the electorate at large.

When faced with pressures from clergy and the church hierarchy, candidates and policymakers must remind the church that in a pluralistic democracy, lawmakers have obligations to conscience, constituents, the Constitution and the common good. When these duties conflict, as they often do on reproductive health issues, there are no simple solutions to the question of appropriate public policy. Instead, lawmakers have a duty to seek policy outcomes that balance these competing claims. By acting to preserve the rights of all citizens as well as the legitimate autonomy of government in a liberal democracy, lawmakers and candidates will be performing an invaluable service to their constituents.



# Introduction

Rarely a week passes that a prochoice Catholic legislator, an advocate or a journalist does not call Catholics for a Free Choice for information about public policy and theology, advice about canon law and church politics, or in the case of policymakers, for some old-fashioned hand holding and a few kind words. During the election season, these calls take on some urgency. Candidates are threatened with excommunication, picketed by antichoice Catholics, asked if they agree with Catholic teaching on stem cells, school vouchers, etc. The Republican National Committee (RNC) has its Catholic Taskforce and the DNC its ethnic committees. Pundits and academics rush to predict the Catholic vote. Catholics are, after all, members of the largest church in America, and local, state and federal candidates alike covet their vote. America's Catholic community is as diverse as it is large, and a true swing vote. Roughly 30 to 32 percent of Catholics are registered Democrats, about 28 to 30 percent are registered Republicans, and the remaining are independents.

The Catholic vote is probably the best definition of a swing vote of any identifiable group in the country. Based on voting patterns, Catholics are the only identifiable group that from year to year does swing (supporting one party's candidate one year for president, supporting another party's candidate another year for president).

This publication offers information and analysis to help candidates and policymakers better understand the place of Catholics—laypeople and leadership—in the 2002 elections. Awareness of the role of religion and religious institutions in the political process is inevitably heightened in this, an election year. Many religious institutions, including the Catholic hierarchy, participate in the political life of the country on an ongoing basis, and insights drawn from religious values can play an important, positive role in the development of public policy. Yet the democratic process is best served when both religious and political leaders understand that their position will be evaluated on their merits and should compete on equal terms with other positions in the public square. During the campaign season, that competition will best serve the public if religious leaders, politicians and the press understand who Catholic voters are—and what the Catholic vote is not.





# The US Catholic Population in Brief

According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, there are 63,863,030 Catholics in the United States, roughly 23 percent of the total US population. Roman Catholicism is the largest single denomination in the United States, roughly 25 percent of the electorate.<sup>1</sup>

Once largely a working class immigrant population, US Catholics now “occupy comparable positions (to their Protestant counterparts) in the overall mix of occupations, levels of education, and earnings, though Catholics are more likely to live in union households and in large cities.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, the average Catholic’s income exceeds the average Protestant’s.<sup>3</sup> Nearly one in five Catholic households—the same ratio as that of white Protestants—earns more than \$50,000 annually.<sup>4</sup> As is true for Protestants, about one-fifth of Catholic adults are college graduates.<sup>5</sup>

The United States ranks third in the world in Catholic population, behind only Brazil and Mexico, according to the 2001 Catholic Almanac. Rhode Island has the highest Catholic population, with 64.3 percent of the population being Catholic. Neighboring Massachusetts comes in at just under half of the population as Catholic. California, New York, and Texas have the largest total Catholic populations, with the three states containing one-third of the US Catholic population.

State	Electoral Votes*	Catholics as Percentage of Population+	Catholic population+
ALABAMA	9	3.5	156,915
ALASKA	3	9.1	54,949
ARIZONA	10	16.3	766,840
ARKANSAS <sup>1</sup>	6	3.6	93,480
CALIFORNIA	55	28.7	9,754,947
COLORADO	9	13.9	569,580
CONNECTICUT	7	40.6	1,334,770
DELAWARE <sup>2</sup>	3	18.0	205,000
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA <sup>3</sup>	3	20.9	510,000
FLORIDA	27	14.1	2,165,392
GEORGIA	15	3.7	327,047
HAWAII <sup>4</sup>	4	10.5	124,987
IDAHO <sup>5</sup>	4	9.9	130,500
ILLINOIS	21	31.6	3,833,424
INDIANA	11	12.9	768,012
IOWA	7	18.8	526,635
KANSAS	6	15.2	404,408
KENTUCKY	8	9.7	376,438
LOUISIANA	9	30.6	1,334,459
MAINE <sup>6</sup>	4	17.2	212,253
MARYLAND <sup>7</sup>	10	16.9	486,607
MASSACHUSETTS	12	47.6	2,968,693
MICHIGAN	17	23.3	2,226,681
MINNESOTA	10	25.9	1,256,268
MISSISSIPPI	6	4.2	115,916
MISSOURI	11	15.6	859,574
MONTANA	3	15.3	124,929
NEBRASKA	5	21.6	360,150
NEVADA	5	24.2	477,977
NEW HAMPSHIRE <sup>8</sup>	4	31.8	325,674
NEW JERSEY	15	44.4	3,409,390
NEW MEXICO	5	24.4	473,107
NEW YORK	31	39.7	7,396,485
NORTH CAROLINA	15	3.8	296,922
NORTH DAKOTA	3	25.9	167,444
OHIO	20	19.4	2,166,967
OKLAHOMA	7	4.3	160,898
OREGON	7	10.1	334,020
PENNSYLVANIA	21	29.7	3,555,007
RHODE ISLAND <sup>9</sup>	4	63.1	623,752
SOUTH CAROLINA <sup>10</sup>	8	3.2	130,255
SOUTH DAKOTA	3	21.5	156,727
TENNESSEE	11	3.4	186,823
TEXAS	34	24.9	5,015,576
UTAH <sup>11</sup>	5	5.0	107,000
VERMONT <sup>12</sup>	3	25.1	148,712
VIRGINIA	13	8.0	553,709
WASHINGTON	11	11.6	664,318
WEST VIRGINIA <sup>13</sup>	5	5.3	97,232
WISCONSIN	10	30.9	1,635,774
WYOMING <sup>14</sup>	3	10.1	48,781

\* U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, U.S. Electoral College: List Of States And Votes, 2004. (Allocation of Electoral Votes based on the 2000 Census.)

+ 2002 Catholic Almanac

<sup>1</sup> Data for Diocese of Little Rock.

<sup>2</sup> Data for Diocese of Wilmington.

<sup>3</sup> Data for Diocese of Washington.

<sup>4</sup> Data for Diocese of Honolulu.

<sup>5</sup> Data for Diocese of Boise.

<sup>6</sup> Data for Diocese of Portland.

<sup>7</sup> Data for Diocese of Baltimore.

<sup>8</sup> Data for Diocese of Manchester.

<sup>9</sup> Data for Diocese of Providence.

<sup>10</sup> Data for Diocese of Charleston.

<sup>11</sup> Data for Diocese of Salt Lake City.

<sup>12</sup> Data for Diocese of Burlington.

<sup>13</sup> Data for Diocese of Charleston.

<sup>14</sup> Data for Diocese of Cheyenne.



Catholics tend to live in large-population states, which cast the highest number of electoral votes in presidential elections. The 12 most heavily Catholic states are Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont in New England; New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania in the Mid-Atlantic; Illinois and Wisconsin in the upper Midwest; Louisiana; and New Mexico. Together, these states have 149 electoral votes, more than half of the 270 required to elect a president.

Seven other states with above-average Catholic populations—California, Hawaii, Nevada, North Dakota, Minnesota, Maine and Michigan—have 97 electoral votes. Combined, these 19 states have 246 electoral votes, nearly enough to win an election.<sup>6</sup>

State	Catholic population+	Catholic population as % of total+	Electoral Votes*	State voting history in past elections <sup>‡</sup>							
				2000				1996			
				Bush (R)	Gore (D)	Nader (G)	Others	Clinton (D)	Dole (R)	Perot (I)	Others
California	9,754,947	28.7	55	42%	53%	4%	1%	51%	38%	7%	4%
Florida	2,165,392	14.1	27	49%	49%	2%	1%	48%	43%	9%	
Illinois	3,833,424	31.6	21	43%	55%	2%	1%	54%	37%	8%	
Massachusetts	2,968,693	47.6	12	33%	60%	6%	1%	61%	28%	9%	2%
Michigan	2,226,681	23.3	17	46%	51%	2%	1%	52%	39%	9%	
Missouri	859,574	15.6	11	50%	47%	2%	1%	48%	41%	10%	
New Jersey	3,409,390	44.4	15	40%	56%	3%	1%	54%	36%	9%	2%
New York	7,396,485	39.7	31	35%	60%	4%	1%	61%	31%	8%	
Ohio	2,166,967	19.4	20	50%	46%	3%	1%	47%	41%	11%	
Pennsylvania	3,555,007	29.7	21	46%	51%	2%	1%	49%	40%	10%	
Texas	5,015,576	24.9	34	59%	38%	2%	1%	49%	44%	7%	
Wisconsin	1,635,774	30.9	10	48%	48%	4%	1%	49%	38%	10%	2%

+ 2002 Catholic Almanac

\* U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, U.S. Electoral College: List Of States And Votes, 2004.  
(Allocation of Electoral Votes based on the 2000 Census.)

‡ The Almanac of American Politics 2002.



# Party Identification: Is There a Catholic Vote?

*Catholics are members of the largest church in the American electorate and have been a principal target for campaigns from Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush.*

One of the most sought after group of voters in America is the Roman Catholic community. Catholics are members of the largest church in the American electorate and have been a principal target for campaigns from Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush. America's diverse and influential Catholic community, roughly 25 percent of the electorate, represents the largest swing vote in American politics, according to exit polls and precinct analyses.<sup>7</sup> Catholics have supported the victorious presidential candidate in every presidential election since 1972 until two years ago, when Democrat Al Gore won a majority of Catholics against George W. Bush.

For many years, to be a Catholic in religion was to be a Democrat in politics.<sup>8</sup> The identification of Catholics with the Democratic Party began with the mass arrival of European immigrants. The dictum that Catholic equals Democrat largely held true until the 1920s, when cracks appeared in the solid Catholic Democratic vote and spread. Since the late 1960s and particularly during the 1980s, the percentage of Catholics self-identified as Democrats declined sharply.<sup>9</sup> "The days are gone when taking Communion and pulling the Democratic lever were the outward signs of a good Catholic."<sup>10</sup>

There is no monolithic Catholic vote, and there never has been. The term "Catholic vote" is less a reference to a religious group than a discussion of a group of people who are identifiable by their cultural characteristics. Contrary to appearance, American Catholics do not vote as a particularly strong bloc. In both party identification and actual votes, Catholics do lean more towards the Democratic Party, but the edge is not strong enough to be considered a bloc. In fact, the largest edge in the last 20 years among Catholics is only about seven percentage points in the presidential election. There is no "Catholic vote" in the sense of a bloc that moves predictably toward one party or the other.

Despite a certain convergence of views among Catholics—a concern for social justice, a collective dedication to the value of the family—Catholics haven't voted as a bloc since the early 1960s, when they solidly backed America's only Catholic president, John F. Kennedy.<sup>11</sup>

Traditionally, Catholic voters have represented just under a quarter of the total presidential vote, and have not been consistent supporters of one party's candidate. They are

a large, identifiable group that switches allegiances as times change—truly a swing group. The Catholic vote is consistently up for grabs, as the Catholics do not vote significantly different from the main stream, even on the issues of reproductive health.

American Catholics have changed, but unfortunately, the leadership of the Catholic church has not changed with them. Catholic voters seldom follow church leaders' political guidance, something the bishops would be the first to acknowledge. The Catholic vote in the 2000 presidential election was essentially mirrored in the overall vote, making it all the more difficult for politicians and political candidates to look to the church and discover the key to the Catholic vote. Gone are the days when candidates and policymakers could rely on the bishops and the Pope to deliver the Catholic vote.

Catholics represent a great racial and national diversity that makes it impossible to vote in lock step. There is now almost an even Democratic-Republican split among Catholics, and 40 percent of Catholics are in the “swing voter” category. In the past, Catholics were a reliable part of the Democratic New Deal coalition. Clustered in the Northeast and Midwest, disproportionately working class, as many as 70 percent of Catholics voted Democratic. Today, there are several different Catholic voters, including white ethnic Catholics from the Midwest and Northeast, who tend to be slightly Republican, and a new generation of Hispanic Catholic voters, mostly in the Southwest, who tend to favor Democrats. A smaller group of black Catholics continues to be a reliable Democratic constituency.<sup>12</sup> Catholics are both Republicans and Democrats whose support cannot be “won” by either party on issues that are distinctively Catholic.

■ Catholics haven't voted as a bloc since the early 1960s, when they solidly backed America's only Catholic president, John F. Kennedy.

# Issues of Importance to Catholic Voters

*Like other Americans, Catholics vote their wallets, whether they go to Mass or not.*

When talking about appealing to Catholic voters, policymakers should be talking about supporting the issues that will resonate with ethnic voters in the cities and older suburbs: health care, economic security, education and social security.<sup>13</sup> The issues important to Catholics are not unlike those significant to mainstream voters. Like other Americans, Catholics vote their wallets, whether they go to Mass or not.

A recent Belden Russonello & Stewart survey of Catholic voters illustrates this point by revealing insights into the motivations of Catholic voters as they considered the choices in the 2000 presidential campaign. According to the survey, Catholic voters are most concerned about bread-and-butter issues of personal economic security. They are influenced more by what the candidates will do about preserving Social Security and Medicare, improving health care and education, and fighting crime, than by church-defined issues of morality.<sup>14</sup>

On a range of issues, Catholic voters are more likely to stand with other Americans than with the US Catholic bishops and the Vatican. Majorities of Catholic voters support the death penalty (80%), legal abortion (66%) and the practice of allowing doctors to assist in the suicide of terminally ill patients (56%).<sup>15</sup> It is perhaps because the bishops cannot show policymakers and candidates that they have the support of Catholic voters that has led them to go on the attack. Some Catholic bishops and antichoice Catholic groups are vocal in their criticism and condemnation of prochoice Catholics. The most recent and widely publicized case is that of Michigan's Attorney General Jennifer Granholm, currently the democratic nominee for governor in that state. She professes a "100 percent prochoice" stance, a position that has brought protesters to her parish, a scolding from the bishop to her parish priest who urged fellow Catholics to try to understand her position, and antichoice activists to the local cardinal's doorstep urging Ms. Granholm be denounced.

These tactics are not uncommon. In 1989, Lucy Killea, a Catholic candidate for California's state senate, was publicly admonished by the Bishop of San Diego and barred from receiving Communion in the diocese—in retribution for her prochoice commitment. That bishop's successors have refused to lift the ban. In 2000, Bishop

Donald Trautman of Erie, Pennsylvania, forced a local Catholic college to withhold an honorary degree it planned to bestow on then-Governor Tom Ridge, and invoked a ban on Ridge speaking at any Catholic facility in the diocese because he is a prochoice Catholic. And in June 2002, Bishop Edmond Carmody of Corpus Christi, Texas, banned both gubernatorial candidate Tony Sanchez and lieutenant governor candidate John Sharp, both Roman Catholics, from speaking in Catholic facilities in their hometowns because they favor abortion rights.

In New Jersey, the Most Reverend John Smith, Bishop of Trenton, New Jersey, forbids publicly honoring any Catholic prochoice politicians or inviting them to speak at public events and educational programs, and excludes them from serving in any ministry in the diocese; similar prohibitions are in force in dioceses in Illinois, Kentucky, New York, and around the country. In Nebraska, one of the bishops claimed that the Democratic party's platform in 2000 was "anti-life, and therefore anti-Catholic," while another of the state's bishops attempted to excommunicate all prochoice Catholic politicians in his diocese. Indeed, excommunication is a common threat bandied about during election years, but the legitimacy of that threat is questioned by canon lawyers in the Catholic church—and the church has never used it.

Predicting the future voting behavior of Catholics is risky. Nevertheless, it is clear that although the Democrats are no longer the party of a majority of the nation's Catholics, Republicans have yet to win that majority. Yet both parties will vie for the distinction of winning the "Catholic vote" in 2002, not accepting that there is no "Catholic vote" to win.

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# The Republican and Democratic Parties Court the Catholic Vote

*An analysis of Bush's first two years in office makes it clear that a new religious player in Washington is growing in influence and aligned with the policy priorities of the Christian right: the Catholic Right.*

The voting behavior of American Catholics suggests that independence and volatility will be its characteristics in the future. A large and crucial portion of Catholic voters will not be firmly tied to either major party—and probably not to a third party, should one develop.<sup>16</sup>

Cultivating the Catholic vote has become the cornerstone of George W. Bush's political strategy for both this year's Senate and House races and for his own re-election effort in 2004. During the 2000 presidential campaign, the GOP aimed to galvanize conservative Catholics on abortion and morality, but stumbled. Much damage was done by the GOP's mishandling of the appointment of the Chaplain of the House of Representatives and George W. Bush's appearance at South Carolina's Bob Jones University, a fundamentalist bastion where Catholics and Catholicism are routinely reviled.

Incidents like these seriously damaged Republican attempts to win over undecided Catholic voters. And indeed, the GOP's Catholic outreach was not enough to win the Catholic vote. Seven of the last eight presidential election winners carried the Catholic vote. The exception was George W. Bush, who lost it to Al Gore, 49 percent to 47 percent.

Since the 2000 election, the GOP has tried to mend fences with Catholic voters, stressing moral and religious themes and "compassionate conservatism" in an attempt to win over churchgoing Catholics. Compassionate conservatism, according to GOP strategists, provides a bridge between traditional economic conservatism and the concerns for social justice and the plight of the poor that have made many Catholics reluctant to join the Republican Party.

An analysis of Bush's first two years in office makes it clear that a new religious player in Washington is growing in influence and aligned with the policy priorities of the Christian right: the Catholic Right.<sup>17</sup> The administration, attempting to develop a Catholic base of the GOP, has named a significant number of conservative Catholics to highly visible roles within the White House and key agencies. Beyond high-level official appointments, there is a host of conservative Catholics who have become key advisers to Bush on the so-called "Catholic strategy."

★ **JIM TOWEY** ★

Director, White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Former head of Florida's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. Started Aging with Dignity, a group formed in opposition to euthanasia, in Tallahassee, FL. Served as legal counsel to Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity and spent one year as a volunteer in the Missionaries of Charities' Gift of Peace AIDS hospice.

★ **SCOTT EVERTZ** ★

Special Adviser to the Secretary of Health and Human Services for the Global Fund to Fight HIV, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Former Director, White House Office of National AIDS Policy. Former president of the Wisconsin Log Cabin Republicans and fundraiser for Wisconsin Right to Life and the Order of St. Camillus, a Catholic AIDS ministry.

★ **ANA GAMONAL** ★

Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, US Department of State. Former Director of Hispanic Affairs for the Republican National Committee, deputy director of Catholic outreach. Former press secretary for Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and deputy director of the Miami-Dade County Republican Party. Served as deputy tour director for Jack Kemp's 1996 vice presidential campaign.

★ **TIM GOEGLIN** ★

Special Assistant to the president and deputy director for public liaison; Catholic specialist in the White House public liaison office, also works on outreach to other faith groups. Former aide to Gary Bauer and to Indiana Senator Dan Coats.

★ **AL GONZALES** ★

White House counsel; described by conservative sources as prochoice. Former Texas Supreme Court justice (1999-2000) and secretary of state (1997-1999). Prior to his appointment as secretary of state, Gonzales served as general counsel to Gov. Bush for three years. Before joining Bush's staff, Gonzales was a partner with the law firm of Vinson & Elkins L.L.P. in Houston, Texas.

★ **DEAL HUDSON** ★

Editor and publisher of Crisis magazine since 1996. GOP national chairman for Catholic outreach. Former Southern Baptist minister who converted to Catholicism. Princeton Theological Seminary, M. Div.; Emory University Ph.D., liberal arts. Associate professor of Philosophy at Fordham University; chair of the Philosophy Department,

Mercer University, Atlanta. Author, Happiness and the Limits of Satisfaction. Adler Fellow, Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies (1992-1994); executive committee, American Catholic Philosophical Association; board of directors, Christian Coalition's Catholic Alliance; advisory board, National Association of Catholic Home Educators; chairman, board of trustees, American Academy for Liberal Education.

★ **JOHN KLINK** ★

Served as a delegate for the United States at the United Nations Special Session on Children, May 8-10, 2002. Former Adviser to the Holy See Mission to the UN. Potential nominee as head of the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. Represented the Vatican on the UNICEF Executive Board 1988-1999. Worked on refugee programs for Catholic Relief Services, 1976-1986. Republican Party National Committee's Catholic Task Force; Catholic Knights of Malta; Knights of the Holy Sepulcher; board of directors, Near East Foundation; named Knight Commander of St. Gregory by Pope John Paul II.

★ **MEL MARTINEZ** ★

Secretary, Department of Housing and Urban Development; Former Orange County (FL) chair, president of the Orlando Utilities Commission, Orlando Housing Commission. First Cuban-American to hold a cabinet post; political ally of Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and one of eight chairs of George Bush's Florida campaign. Came to the US at the age of 15 as part of the Catholic church's Peter Pan airlift of children from Cuba.

★ **JOHN NEGROPONTE** ★

Ambassador to the UN. Former ambassador to Honduras (1981-1985), Mexico (1989-1993), Philippines (1993-1996). Deputy assistant secretary of state 1976-1980; assistant secretary of state 1985-1987; deputy assistant to the president for national security affairs 1985-1987; National Security Council 1971-1973. Former executive vice president for global markets at the McGraw Hill Companies.

★ **JIM NICHOLSON** ★

US Ambassador to the Vatican; former chair of the Republican National Party (1997-2000) and Colorado developer. Ten years with RNC prior to being elected chair; served as co-chair of Sen. Phil Gramm's unsuccessful bid for president. Former chair, Volunteers of America.

★ **ANTHONY PRINICIPI** ★

Veterans Affairs secretary. Served as deputy VA secretary in first Bush administration. Former COO of Lockheed Martin and Republican staff director to the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee; legislative counsel to the Navy Department.

★ **TOMMY THOMPSON** ★

Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services; former four-term Republican governor of Wisconsin, known nationally for welfare reform efforts. Served in Wisconsin Assembly 1966-1986; former chair National Governors' Association.

★ **BRIAN TIERNEY** ★

Philadelphia public relations and advertising executive; owner of Tierney Communications. Adviser to Philadelphia Archbishop Anthony Bevilacqua. Chair of the RNC's Catholic Task Force for 2000 election cycle. Former political director of GOPAC and member of former President Bush's finance committees in 1988 and 1992. Leader of the REACH coalition, which promoted school vouchers in Pennsylvania and vice chair of Business Leaders Organized for Catholic Schools. He was named a Knight in the Order of St. Gregory by Pope John Paul II.

★ **ANN WAGNER** ★

Republican National Committee co-chair; Missouri Republican Party chair. Director of the GOP's House and Senate Redistricting Commission, 1991. Missouri executive director, Bush/Quayle campaign, 1992; 2nd congressional district chair, Dole campaign, 1996; adviser to the Ashcroft for Senate campaign, 1994. Formerly with Hallmark Cards and Ralston Purina.

★ **STEVE WAGNER** ★

Director, Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Former Executive Director, RNC Catholic Task Force; president QEV Analytics, a Washington-based polling firm. Former pollster with Luntz Research, where he conducted research for the Republicans' "Contract with America." Former chief of European affairs for the US Information Agency and political director for the National Republican Institute for International Affairs. Founding executive director of Jack Kemp's Prosperity political action campaign; served on the leadership staff of the US House of Representatives.

★ **PETER WEHNER** ★

White House speech writer; former aide to conservative Republican Bill Bennett and executive director of policy for Empower America.

With the 2002 election just weeks away, there has been more talk in recent months about the Republican's strategy to reach out to Catholics. In 2000, the Republican strategy was two pronged—reach out to the bishops themselves and work the phones to gain

the support of church-going conservative Catholics. These efforts have been officially referred to as Catholic Outreach, a program under the umbrella Grassroots Development Division of the Republican National Committee (RNC).

In June 2002, a White House computer disk containing data from a White House presentation on GOP mid-term election strategies was found in a public park in Washington, DC, revealing that Catholic outreach remains a pivotal priority for Republican strategists. The presentation notes that the GOP plans to “grow” its outreach to Catholics in order to make gains in November 2002.<sup>18</sup> Last year this might have meant an increased emphasis on White House interaction with American Catholic bishops; however, the Republican Party and the White House are spending much less time openly courting Catholic bishops and cardinals. The sex abuse scandal has created a problem for some GOP and White House advisors who have argued in the past that an important part of their strategy for winning the Catholic vote is to closely ally themselves with the Catholic hierarchy. There have been some signs that these strategists are worried that their association with the Catholic hierarchy will hurt their chances with Catholic voters, who have largely voiced dissatisfaction in opinion polls in recent months with the Catholic hierarchy for the negligent handling of abusive priests. Although *Crisis* magazine’s Deal Hudson has told White House Chief of Staff Karl Rove to continue their close ties with the bishops, an anonymous advisor close to the White House complained in early May that the GOP has “relied too much on the hierarchy” to reach Catholic voters and predicted that this strategy “will force them to think more broadly about just who Catholics are.”<sup>19</sup>

The GOP’s Catholic Outreach is focused on grassroots outreach to Catholic voters and is situated within a larger grassroots campaign to attract Latinos, women, labor union members, and other groups not traditionally associated with the Republican Party. Catholic Outreach is admittedly “aimed at promoting the culture of life,”<sup>20</sup> the Pope’s term for anti-abortion positions. The GOP’s strategy however, is misguided. The major force moving Catholics into the Republican circle is their rise up the socio-economic ladder. Thanks to many factors, including Catholic schools and the GI Bill, non-Hispanic Catholics are now part of the American mainstream. Higher incomes have made them less dependent on government programs and more sensitive to the higher income tax brackets that they have entered.<sup>21</sup> It is important to remember though, that although Catholic ties to the Democratic Party have been weakened, they have not been replaced by strengthened ties to the GOP.

The Democratic Party has a growing problem with Catholic voters, and has done very little to maintain its Catholic support base. In 2000, George W. Bush nearly split the Catholic vote with Al Gore, after former President Bill Clinton had carried Catholics by 16 percentage points four years earlier. The Democrats had a window of opportunity in the 2000 election through Bush’s Bob Jones University flap, but the opportunity was not taken. The Democrats’ prochoice position makes it difficult to reach out publicly to the bishops, and the party has not developed its outreach to liberal Catholic lay people. The Democrats have not been courting Catholic voters in the same deliberate way that the GOP has been, because they generally believe that their positions on the issues speak for themselves.

Democratic themes naturally play to Catholic voters. When comparing Republicans and Democrats issue by issue with the policy positions promoted by the bishops, the Democrats are more in line with the Bishops on social justice issues, especially in terms of medical and educational needs. While it is true that in 1994, 1996 and 2000, a majority of Catholics voted Democratic, it has been a fragile majority that has the potential to tip the scales in the opposite direction during the next election cycle. The polling data suggests that many Catholic voters currently view President Bush very much as a “rich man’s president,” which could provide a boost in votes for the Democratic Party in the 2004 election.<sup>22</sup>

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# Religion and Politics Don't Mix

*The majority of Catholics are not receptive to political messages delivered from the pulpit*

**T**he majority of Catholics are not receptive to political messages delivered from the pulpit at all, whether or not they agree with the issue position put forth by the church.

Not only does clergy politicking make many churchgoers uncomfortable, it has no significant impact on their voting behavior. In fact, the Catholic church has very little influence on the voting behavior of the vast majority of Catholic voters. Only 5 percent of Catholic voters surveyed by Belden Russonello & Stewart believe the views of US Catholic bishops are very important in deciding who they will vote for. Seventy-five percent of respondents said the views of the bishops were unimportant. Six in 10, or 60 percent of Catholics, oppose the Catholic bishops making public statements regarding candidates in office. Furthermore, 70 percent of Catholics surveyed do not believe that the Catholic bishops should use the political arena to advance their moral opinions.<sup>23</sup> These findings suggest that Catholic voters overwhelmingly do not want bishops passing moral judgment on candidates and are not being influenced by such statements in the voting booth.



# The Catholic Voter and Reproductive Health

**A**lthough reproductive health issues are not a primary concern of Catholic voters, the bishops have consistently claimed otherwise. Catholics' views on reproductive health issues are often distorted and misrepresented by the church, understandably confusing candidates and policymakers about what is spin and what is reality.

When the subject of reproductive health is linked with religion, most Americans quickly think of the Roman Catholic church and its longstanding, vehement, and public opposition to legal abortion. There is good reason for making this connection. From the moment the Roe v. Wade decision was announced in 1973 to this very day, the US Catholic bishops' opposition to access to reproductive health has been at the forefront of the church's political agenda.<sup>24</sup>

While the USCCB plays an active role in the policy arena, it does not represent the views of Catholics on any subject. It represents the opinions of the nation's 300-odd Catholic bishops, not the nation's 63.8 million Catholics, a distinction it rarely acknowledges in its policy statements.

While the bishops and other conservatives continue to spin debate on reproductive health care, creating the illusion that the issue is of primary concern to Catholic voters, Catholics' preference for Al Gore in the 2000 elections proves the bishops' fierce opposition to reproductive rights has not found traction with Catholic voters. Polls have consistently shown that the majority of Catholics disagree with the bishops and believe that reproductive health care should be legal and accessible. To further illustrate this point, we have assembled the following data on Catholic opinion and reproductive healthcare:

*While the USCCB plays an active role in the policy arena, it does not represent the views of Catholics on any subject.*

## ★ CONTRACEPTION AND FAMILY PLANNING ★

- ★ 96 percent of all Catholic women who have ever had sex have used modern contraceptive methods at some point in their lives.<sup>25</sup>
- ★ 75 percent of Catholic women of childbearing age who are currently sexually active use a contraceptive method forbidden by the church.<sup>26</sup>
- ★ Catholics are about as likely as the total population to support US aid programs for international family planning, 78 percent vs. 80 percent.<sup>27</sup>

- ★ Catholics are almost as likely as the total population, 74 percent vs. 75 percent—to strongly or somewhat support a federal measure to require health insurers that offer prescription drug coverage to cover prescription contraceptives.<sup>28</sup>
- ★ Less than 3 percent of sexually active Catholic women use church-approved family planning methods.<sup>29</sup>

In spite of these statistics, the Vatican and US bishops have continued their emphasis, even increased emphasis during the papacy of Pope John Paul II, on the “evils” of artificial contraception. Among lay Catholics, dissent is pervasive – the thorough rejection of the teaching plays out in the personal and private realm when Catholics decide to use family planning methods that the church considers sinful.<sup>30</sup> On a number of reproductive health issues, candidates and policymakers would find that active espousal of reproductive health rights would win Catholic support, and attacks on policymakers who oppose reproductive health would make Catholics think twice about supporting these candidates.

### ★ EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION ★

Emergency contraception (EC) is a safe and effective means of reducing the risk of pregnancy after unprotected intercourse, thus preventing the need for abortion. There is mounting evidence that Catholic hospitals are not providing EC to rape victims. This practice is counter to the standards outlined by the American Medical Association, which state that women who have been sexually abused should be counseled about the risk of pregnancy, and offered EC.<sup>31</sup>

- ★ Catholics support emergency contraception. Seventy-three percent of Catholics in a recent Hart poll said they favor hospitals and doctors offering EC to patients, and 73 percent also support expanding public health information about EC.<sup>32</sup> Seventy-seven percent of Catholics think that teenagers should have access to EC. Seventy-eight percent of Catholics favor requiring all emergency rooms that receive federal funding to inform sexual assault victims of the availability of emergency contraception, even though some Catholic hospitals object.<sup>33</sup>

### ★ ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE AT CATHOLIC AND COMMUNITY HOSPITALS ★

As health care in the United States continues to evolve, takeovers and mergers involving non-religious and Catholic institutions are increasing. American women want and expect a wide range of health services to be available to them, regardless of the religious affiliation of the hospitals, pharmacies, or insurance companies they rely on in their communities. Policymakers and candidates who support access to reproductive health care are in sync with Catholic views.

- ★ A majority of Catholic women, 52 percent, prefer a hospital that offers abortions, in spite of the high-profile Roman Catholic church opposition to all abortions.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, 54 percent of strongly religious Catholic women would choose an institution that provides abortion counseling and referral.<sup>35</sup>
- ★ Women strongly believe that Catholic religious teachings should not influence the kinds of health services that are available. Likewise, women strongly oppose potential legislation allowing hospitals or pharmacists the right to refuse to perform or supply medical services because of religious beliefs.<sup>36</sup>
- ★ Eighty-seven percent of women want their hospital to offer medically indicated abortions, whether or not the institution is affiliated with the Roman Catholic church.<sup>37</sup>
- ★ Ninety-one percent of women want access to birth control pills, 85 percent want access to sterilization procedures and 78% want access to emergency contraception for victims of rape, regardless of the religious affiliation of the institution.<sup>38</sup>
- ★ Among Catholic respondents, 71 percent of Catholic women believe a hospital owner's religious objections should not be permitted to overrule a doctor's decision about treatment for a patient.<sup>39</sup>

■ On a number of reproductive health issues, candidates and policymakers would find that active espousal of reproductive health rights would win Catholic support

■ There is a clear divergence of opinion between church leadership, which vehemently opposes stem cell research, and the majority of Catholic voters.

■ Catholics are prochoice, particularly Catholic women.

## ★ STEM CELL RESEARCH AND THERAPEUTIC CLONING ★

The USCCB has publicly urged Congress not to fund embryonic stem cell research, stating, “embryonic stem cell research has not helped a single human patient or demonstrated any therapeutic benefit.”<sup>40</sup>

There is a clear divergence of opinion between church leadership, which vehemently opposes stem cell research, and the majority of Catholic voters. Opinion among mainstream Catholic voters on embryonic stem cell research closely mirrors the electorate at large. A Harris Poll released July 25, 2001 shows that:

- ★ 68 percent of all respondents were familiar with the stem cell issue. Among those with some knowledge of the debate, 62 percent favored research and 22 percent opposed it.
- ★ Sixty-one percent of Catholics questioned in the poll supported stem cell research, compared with 50 percent of born again Christians and 49 percent of Republicans.<sup>41</sup>
- ★ According to an August 14, 2001 Gallop poll, seven in 10 Americans think research on stem cells is necessary, and this includes 31 percent who think stem cell research is morally wrong. Just 23 percent of the public believes that stem cell research is medically unnecessary.<sup>42</sup>

In the ongoing discussions about embryonic cloning for medical purposes, there are multiple voices and different understandings about when human life begins and about our moral obligations to one another and future generations. Public policy should respect and reflect this diversity. In a society such as ours, which sharply divides church and state, laws governing human cloning should reflect ethical positions that are not based on any god or set of religious beliefs.

★ **ABORTION** ★

The issue of abortion does not alienate Catholic voters from the Democratic Party. Catholics are prochoice, particularly Catholic women. Catholic voters are increasingly less deferential to the church for their positions on reproductive choice, and there are few single-issue prolife voters among the Catholic voters.

- ★ Like the rest of the nation, 58 percent Catholic voters are more likely to call themselves pro-choice on abortion.<sup>43</sup>
- ★ Sixty-six percent of Catholic voters believe abortion should be legal. Only a third of Catholic voters surveyed disagree with legal abortion.<sup>44</sup>



# Conclusions and Recommendations

Catholic voters are evenly divided in their support for the Republican Party, the Democratic Party, or no party at all. Catholic voters are now a looming presence on the fringe of both parties, and being a Catholic by no means determines one's political viewpoint. Yet both national parties are presently making the strongest bid for the Catholic vote in at least a dozen years. This is mainly due to the large concentration of Catholics in key battleground states and because of their track record of going with the winner in presidential elections. The bid for the Catholic vote is also somewhat due to a general lack of understanding about how Catholics vote—and do not vote. For all of the attention that both parties have placed on the importance of the Catholic vote, many candidates and policymakers are unaware of exactly what the “Catholic vote” means.

Catholics do not vote as a bloc, and continue the trend of refusing to become solid party voters. In fact, Catholic votes are quite fragmented because Catholic voters are not motivated by religious beliefs when they enter the voting booth. Consequently, candidates and policymakers cannot discover the key to the Catholic vote by looking to church doctrine; Catholics follow church doctrine selectively. Furthermore, the church hierarchy can no longer be depended upon to deliver votes for either party, as Catholics are uncomfortable with politicking from the pulpit and are not influenced by the political recommendations of their priests, bishops or even the Pope.

Issues of importance to Catholic voters are often misrepresented by the Catholic hierarchy, and therefore misunderstood by political candidates and policymakers. The majority of Catholic voters are not thinking about abortion and reproductive healthcare when they enter the voting booth. They, like most Americans who head to the polls, are thinking about issues of personal and financial security, such as social security, education and social services.

Unfortunately, because of the Catholic hierarchy's lobby efforts, reproductive health issues of no significant importance to Catholic and non-Catholic voters have found their way into political campaigns and policymaking, sometimes dominating the political landscape. Therefore, it is imperative that candidates and policymakers be aware of the issues that are important to Catholic voters, while at the same time, be aware of Catholic

*Catholic votes are quite fragmented because Catholic voters are not motivated by religious beliefs when they enter the voting booth.*

opinion on the moral issues that the church falsely promotes as important to Catholic voters.

When faced with pressures from clergy and hierarchy, candidates and policymakers must remind the church that in a pluralistic democracy, lawmakers have obligations to conscience, constituents, the Constitution, and the common good. When these duties conflict, as they do on reproductive health issues, there are no simple automatic solutions to the question of appropriate public policy. Instead, lawmakers have a duty to seek policy outcomes that balance these competing claims.<sup>45</sup>

The church should likewise learn from the need to exercise prudence and caution in attempting to shape public policy. By preserving the rights of all citizens as well as the legitimate autonomy of government in a liberal democracy, lawmakers and candidates will perform an invaluable service to their constituents.<sup>46</sup>

The responsibilities of policymakers and political candidates in a pluralistic democracy are complex and cannot be distilled into a simplistic duty to enact church teaching into civil law. We have shown that the voting behavior of American Catholics suggests that independence and volatility will be its characteristics in the future. The votes of American Catholics, not the “Catholic Vote” is truly up for grabs. There is no “Catholic vote,” only Catholic voters.



# Excerpt from "Spin Doctrine"

By Franklin Foer

From *The New Republic*, June 5, 2000.

Is George W. Bush an unwitting papist? You wouldn't think so, given his infamous flirtation with anti-Catholic bigot Bob Jones—not to mention his very public born-again evangelicalism and his coterie of evangelical advisers. But Bush's big idea, compassionate conservatism, owes a great deal to Catholicism...It has strong roots in Catholic neoconservative doctrine, most importantly in the work of two intellectuals, Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Novak, who hatched the idea as a way to reconcile their two historically hostile loves: Catholic faith and faith in the free market.

Their primary tool has been the Catholic concept of "subsidiarity"—the idea that social problems are best understood and solved by the organizations and people closest to them...Like all authentic neocons, Neuhaus and Novak started on the left. As a Lutheran priest (who later converted), Neuhaus headlined anti-war rallies and toiled in ghetto parishes. Novak, a sociologist who studied white ethnics, shelled for Eugene McCarthy's presidential campaign. But both were ticked off by liberalism's dalliance with liberation theology and the nuclear freeze. Fuming at the left, they went down the Bristol path, becoming fierce opponents of the welfare state and brash proponents of the private sector.

...Neuhaus and Novak saw their project as theological as well as political. To reconcile their capitalist faith in self-interest with Catholicism's abnegation of self-interest, Neuhaus and Novak have not only highlighted subsidiarity, they have redefined Pius's concept of it—removing any statist inflection and making it a devolutionary doctrine. Rhetorically, subsidiarity latches them to the Catholic tradition of social justice and gives them cover when their left-wing Catholic brethren accuse them of callously betraying the catechism with their hostility to government expenditures. There's no need for the sclerotic welfare state, Novak has argued, when "the creative impulse is located in the people at the grass roots who no longer trust big government." In neocon hands, subsidiarity is a moral argument that state and local government (instead of the feds) and local community groups (instead of government at all) best serve the poor.



For Republicans, frequently accused of callousness themselves, the rhetoric serves the same purpose: It helps them deflect charges that they're indifferent to the plight of the poor. Speechwriter Peggy Noonan, a Catholic, tried to work Neuhaus and Novak's notions into President Bush's repertoire. And it's no coincidence that George W., who faces even greater pressure to shake his party's reputation for coldhearted libertarianism, has incorporated neocon Catholic language into his campaign. In his first major stump speech...Bush invoked "solidarity" and the "common good," two phrases central to Catholic thought, while proposing to spend a small fortune on faith-based charities.

...Evangelical reliance on Catholics isn't simply a function of goodwill; it's a function of need. Because of their conscious disengagement from public life...American evangelicals have not developed nearly as vibrant a public intellectual tradition as Catholics have...if Bush wins in November, expect Catholic social doctrine to make a prominent appearance in his State of the Union address. If he loses, subsidiarity's theoretical elegance won't matter. It will be thrown out the window and replaced with some updated version of the more relativistic Rockefeller Republicanism that, if it has religious roots at all, finds them in mainline Protestantism. And if that fails? Perhaps Buddhism has an untapped neoconservative strain.

# Excerpt from "Address to the Ministers of Houston"

*A speech delivered September 12, 1960 to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, Houston, Texas, by presidential candidate John F. Kennedy.*

I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute—where no Catholic prelate would tell the President, should he be a Catholic, ● ● ● how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the President who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.

I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jewish; where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches, or any other ecclesiastical source; where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials; and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.

For, while this year it may be a catholic against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed, in other years it has been, and may someday be again, a Jew—or a Quaker—or a Unitarian—or a Baptist. It was Virginia's harassment of Baptist preachers, for example, that helped lead to Jefferson's Statute of Religious Freedom. Today I may be the victim, but tomorrow it may be you, until the whole fabric of our harmonious society is ripped at a time of great national peril.

Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end; where all men and all churches are treated as equal; where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice; where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind; and where Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, at both the lay and pastoral level, will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American ideal of brotherhood.

That is the kind of America in which I believe, and it represents the kind of presidency in which I believe—a great office that must be neither humbled by making it the instrument of any religious group nor tarnished by arbitrarily withholding it—its occu-

pancy—from the members of any one religious group. I believe in a President whose views on religion are his own private affair, neither imposed upon him by the nation nor imposed by the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office.

I would not look with favor upon a President working to subvert the First Amendment's guarantees of religious liberty; nor would our system of checks and balances permit him to do so. And neither do I look with favor upon those who would subvert Article VI of the Constitution by requiring a religious test—even by indirection—for if they disagree with that safeguard, they should be openly working to repeal it.

I want a chief executive whose public acts are responsible to all and obligated to none—who can attend any ceremony, service, or dinner his office may appropriately require of him to fulfill, and whose fulfillment of his presidential office is not limited or conditioned by any religious oath, ritual, or obligation...

I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for President who also happens to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me.

Whatever issue may come before me as President if I should be elected—on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling, or any other subject—I will make my decision in accordance with these views, in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be in the national interest, and without regard to outside religious pressure or dictates.

And no power or threat of punishment could cause me to decide otherwise.

# Excerpt from "Chasing Conservative Catholics"

By Patricia Miller  
*Conscience, Summer 2001*

The lynchpin of the Bush administration's so-called Catholic strategy is the belief that there exists a significant bloc of conservative, church-going—or "committed," to use the GOP shorthand—Catholics who are ripe for the GOP's picking. Bush's Catholic outreach was reportedly sparked by conservative Catholic pollster Steve Wagner's work in *Crisis* magazine. Wagner postulates that "religiously active voters have been gradually migrating to the Republican Party, leaving the Democrats as the party of the religiously indifferent as well as the politically liberal." According to Wagner, Catholics who attend Mass weekly are concerned about the moral decay of America, are supportive of the "traditional" family and are anti-abortion. Presumably they also support other GOP priorities such as lower taxes, "smaller" government and an increase in military spending.

The GOP's attraction to this constituency is obvious: if these right-leaning Catholics exist in significant numbers, they could be folded into the party's conservative Christian base and the resulting realignment would ensure Republican electoral victory. But is the GOP chasing a mirage? Undoubtedly there are conservatives within the Catholic faith who would not be uncomfortable with the political priorities of the Christian Right. And Catholics have shown a tendency to be swing voters since Nixon was elected. But a detailed analysis of Catholics' attitudes and values indicates that the percentage of truly conservative Catholics is relatively small and unlikely to increase.

Republicans have been quick to point out that Bush prevailed among Catholics who go to Mass every week and link this to Bush's positions on abortion, lower taxes and the moral direction of the country. Bush's chief political strategist, Karl Rove, who is in charge of the White House's Catholic outreach effort, told *U.S. News & World Report*, "Catholics are socially and politically conservative." Andrew Card, another White House official closely involved in the outreach effort, told the same publication that Catholics' "core values are consistent with and reflected by the values of the president."

But church-going Catholics are a more heterogeneous and socially liberal population than Republican strategists acknowledge. And while it's convenient to divide Catholics

into conservative weekly Mass goers and the liberals who sleep in on Sunday mornings, the reality is more complex.

To the Bush administration and many political strategists, a “committed” or “religiously active” Catholic is synonymous with a person who attends Mass every week. Wagner not only identifies Mass attendance as the central factor separating liberal and conservative Catholics, but also treats it as an “either/or” phenomena—either you go to Mass or you don’t. But, as many Catholics know, this division is simplistic. Catholics can more accurately be divided into three categories: those who usually attend Mass every week, those who attend Mass less frequently than every week, and those who rarely or never attend Mass. According to a National Catholic Reporter poll, over three-quarters of Catholics (77%) believe you can be a good Catholic without attending Mass every Sunday—up from 70 percent in 1987.

While Mass attendance can be an indicator of religious commitment, it is not the only indicator. According to a report by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, 20 percent of Catholics say they usually attend Mass weekly, yet 37 percent of Catholics describe their attachment to the church as “strong.” In the just-published book *American Catholics: Gender, Generation and Commitment*, noted Catholic sociologist William D’Antonio and his colleagues have developed a more nuanced measurement of religious commitment. The data in *American Catholics* comes from three national surveys of American Catholics organized by the Gallup Organization over a span of 12 years—making it uniquely useful in tracking changes in Catholic attitudes since 1987.

The index of commitment to the Catholic church factors in three variables: Mass attendance, response to the statement “I would never leave the church” on a seven-point scale, and response to the question of how important the church is to one’s life. The addition of these second two variables is critical, says D’Antonio, because “people who just go to Mass every week are not as likely to be supportive of Vatican policies” as those who score highly on all three variables. This undercuts a major assumption of the Bush strategy, which lumps all Catholics who attend Mass weekly into the mold of the Vatican-obedient, and therefore conservative, Catholic.

Highly committed Catholics, according to D’Antonio, are those Catholics who not only attend Mass every week, but on a seven-point scale rate the statement “I would never leave the church” a “1” or a “2”. They also rate the church as the most important or one of the most important influences on their life. Moderately committed Catholics attend church at least monthly, rank the statement “I would never leave the church” in the middle of the seven-point scale (3, 4 or 5), and rate the church as important as other things in their life. Catholics with a low level of commitment rarely or never attend Mass, rank the statement “I would never leave the church” as a “6” or “7,” and say the church is not an important influence in their life.

According to D’Antonio, less than one-quarter (23%) of American Catholics were “highly committed” to the church in 1999—down four points since 1987. “This is an indication of a slowly decreasing percentage of highly committed Catholics,” he notes. By far the largest percentage of Catholics—60 percent—are moderately committed to the church, while 17 percent score low in commitment. At the same time, he notes,

Mass attendance among all Catholics has dropped: 44 percent of Catholics said they went to Mass weekly in 1987, but only 37 percent did so in 1999.

According to the Belden, Russonello and Stewart poll, Mass attendance does not correlate with party affiliation as clearly as the GOP would like. Less than half (46%) of Catholics who attend Mass every week identify as Republicans, while nearly the same percentage say they are Democrats (42%) and only 12 percent are independent—suggesting that there is not much room for GOP recruitment here.

Tellingly, despite an unprecedented outreach effort to three million Catholics in key states by the Republican National Committee's Catholic Task Force, Al Gore won Michigan and Pennsylvania, two of the most critical Catholic states, as well as the overall Catholic vote.

If the past is any guide, Catholics will most likely continue to be an important bloc of swing voters that neither party can take for granted.

# “Setting Up Shop at the GOP”

By *Patricia Miller*  
*Conscience, Summer 2001*

Catholics are in fashion in Washington. Catholic voters are being wooed by the Republican Party a full three-and-one-half years before the next presidential election. President Bush is spouting Catholic theology and holding up Catholic social activist Dorothy Day as a role model. Catholic thinkers and policy makers are being given influential roles within the Bush inner circle. For years, Americans concerned about social justice issues, women’s right to reproductive health care and the separation of church and state have worried about the influence of the conservative Christian Right on the Republican party. But an analysis of the recent campaign and Bush’s first six months in office makes it clear that there is a new religious power in Washington that is growing in influence in its own right and aligned with the policy priorities of the Christian Right: the Catholic Right. And while they are in the minority among Catholics, these right-leaning Catholics have been catapulted to positions of influence as the result of efforts by the president and the Republican Party to expand the base of the party by attracting Catholics.

...The Christian Coalition, racked by internal conflict, a loss of leadership and declining membership, is not the political force it once was in the 1980s and early 1990s. The presidential election of 2000 is shaping up to be contentious, and once again looks as if it will hinge on a band of states in the Northeast and Rust Belt—New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Illinois—that are heavily Catholic.

Seizing the importance of this key constituency and realizing its increasing tendency to swing between parties, in February of 1999 the Republican National Committee launched a “Catholic Task Force” to drum up support for Bush’s presidential bid among Catholics. The roster of the RNC’s Catholic Task Force read like a “who’s who” among politically conservative Catholic policymakers, legislators and businesspeople. The chair was Thomas Melady, the former US ambassador to the Vatican. Other members included Mary Cunningham Agee, founder of the Nurturing Network; William Barr, former attorney general under the first President Bush; Peter Flanigan, a trustee of the conservative John M. Olin Foundation; Alexander Haig, former Secretary of State in the



Reagan administration; and John Klink, an adviser to the Holy See's UN Mission. Former Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn was the state chair of Florida.

By the Republican National Convention, the...task force was in full swing. During the convention, it was assigned a prime luxury box—usually reserved for big-ticket corporate donors—where [Brian] Tierney (head of Tierney Communications, the largest communications agency in Philadelphia) welcomed guests including vocal anti-abortion opponent Rep Chris Smith (R-NJ), then VP nominee Dick Cheney and a parade of priests, nuns and prominent Catholic business people. Tierney, a close adviser to Philadelphia Archbishop Anthony Bevilacqua, arranged for the cardinal to give the convention's closing, prime-time benediction.

At the same time, candidate Bush began to incorporate references to Catholic social teaching in his speeches, most notably the idea of subsidiarity—that local problems are best solved by local actors. Bush reportedly was tutored in Catholic social teaching by Richard John Neuhaus, a convert from the Lutheran church, and John DiIulio, a conservative Catholic criminologist who would become the head of Bush's faith-based effort, and Deal Hudson [of *Crisis* magazine].

No sooner had the Bushes moved into the White House than they stepped out for one of their first social engagements—dinner at the residence of Washington Archbishop Theodore McCarrick just five days after Bush took the oath of office. The meeting was arranged by Deal Hudson at the request of Carl Rove in a call made the morning after the inauguration. In attendance were Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, outgoing Washington Archbishop James Hickey, and Galveston-Houston Bishop Joseph Fiorenza, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Shortly after, Bush outlined his plans for a “faith-based initiative” that would allow religious groups to participate in government-funded social service programs without the existing limitations on linking social services to religious activities.

Beyond the bishops high-profile politicking with the president—and perhaps more importantly for the long-term shape and direction of US social policy—conservative Catholics are playing a crucial role in the inner circle of the Bush administration, both formally and informally as advisers on outreach and policy regarding the so-called Catholic vote.

Bush has named a slew of Catholics to highly visible roles within the White House and key agencies. Some have histories within the conservative movement and links to well-known conservative Catholics such as former Education Secretary and *Book of Virtues* author Bill Bennett, while others are party loyalists with links to important constituencies such as Hispanic Catholics...beyond official appointments, there is a host of conservative Catholics who have become key advisers to Bush on the so-called “Catholic strategy.” At the locus of many of the relationships and conversations regarding the Catholic vote is Deal Hudson. It was Hudson who reportedly brought Steve Wagner's work to the attention of the Republican Party and who arranged many key meetings, including Bush's post-election dinner with Washington Archbishop Theodore McCarrick. He has served as the liaison between the Bush team and the conservative Catholic community since 1998.

While most people are still getting used to the idea of President George Bush II, the Republican Party already has its eye on the next election cycle: the 2002 congressional elections and the 2004 presidential elections. On April 18, Republican National Committee Chair Jim Gilmore announced the new National Catholic Leadership Forum—in effect Phase III of the Catholic Task Force. Deal Hudson has been named the GOP's new national chairman for Catholic outreach. At the inaugural meeting of the forum on April 25, attended by some 350 Catholics, Hudson said, "The time for talk is over. The time to organize Catholics behind the party of life—that time has begun."

Bush continues to make high-profile Catholic appearances and pepper his speeches with references to Catholic social teaching. On March 22, he spoke at the dedication of the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington, DC, praising the pope effusively and speaking of the "culture of life," and hosting 60 members of the hierarchy and Catholic leaders at a White House reception. Then in May, he delivered the commencement speech at Notre Dame University and called for a "new war on poverty"—albeit one led by private charities—while quoting Catholic social activist Dorothy Day. In his speech, Bush forgot to note that Day was a socialist, or that the Catholic worker movement she founded refused government funding for fear it would corrupt their work.

Whether or not Bush's rhetoric is just new window dressing on old conservative policies, the reality is that the Bush administration is pursuing two very different, and contradictory, constituencies with its "Catholic strategy." In order to win the Catholic vote, they are attempting to woo a Catholic hierarchy that is fundamentally at odds with Catholic voters...It may be impossible for the Bush administration to safely traverse the deep divide between the official positions of the Catholic hierarchy and the Catholics who actually count in the voting booth.

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*\*To order a copy of this publication, please contact Catholics for a Free Choice.*

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# Beyond The Spin

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