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# The U.S. Catholic Bishops, “Religious Freedom,” and the 2012 Presidential Election Campaign: A Reflection

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"Let's honor the conscience of those who disagree with abortion, and draft a sensible conscience clause, and make sure that all of our health care policies are grounded not only in sound science, but also in clear ethics, as well as respect for the equality of women. Those are things we can do."

Barack Obama<sup>1</sup>

**O**n June 28, 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act (ACA). While rightly perceived as a major victory for the administration, not all were appeased or satisfied. In particular, before the Supreme Court ruling, the U.S. Catholic Bishops had been actively opposing the ACA on a number of fronts, including statements directed to U.S. Catholics, calls for remedial legislation, and litigation in the courts. In fact, the U.S. Catholic bishops had joined dozens of Catholic organizations in suing the federal government over some of the administration's key health care provisions. In particular, Health and Human Services (HHS) mandates were viewed as an attempt to coerce employers to pay for health care plan provisions assisting in female sterilization and contraceptives, including abortifacients. In addition, it was asserted that the ACA would exclude undocumented immigrants from participation in the proposed health care exchanges. Thus, from the bishops' point of view, both Catholic conscience and Catholic action was threatened. Early on in the bishops' opposition to the Obama administration's health care plans, the bishops determined that the core value in jeopardy was

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“religious freedom.” The Church was particularly concerned about the state’s incursion upon its ability to promote, defend, and implement its religious doctrine, especially in the areas of marriage and family life.<sup>2</sup> In February 2012, Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York and president of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) lamented: “Never before has the federal government forced individuals and organizations to go out into the marketplace and buy a product that violates their conscience. This shouldn’t happen in a land where free exercise of religion ranks first in the Bill of Rights.”<sup>3</sup>

### **“A FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM”**

On April 12, 2012, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued “Our First Most Cherished Liberty.” This document outlined the bishops’ concerns over religious liberty and called for “A Fortnight for Freedom,” that they designated as a two-week period of reflection and action, which commenced June 21 and continued through July 4, 2012. The bishops urged lay people in dioceses and parishes throughout the nation to participate in this event, calling upon “all the energies the Catholic community can muster” to defend religious liberty. They designated the Feast of Christ the King, which occurred later, as a day when all bishops and priests in the United States were to deliver a homily on religious freedom.<sup>4</sup> In addition to objections to the HHS mandates in the implementation of the ACA, the bishops’ statement decried other attacks on religious liberty, including placing Catholic foster care and adoption services at risk by threatening support for those Catholic charities that refused to place children for adoption with same sex or unmarried opposite sex couples; impeding the work of preventing sex trafficking by requiring agencies like the USCCB’s Migration and Refugee Services to provide or refer clients for contraception and abortion services; and unduly restricting and sanctioning those who provided “charity” to undocumented workers, among other presumed government intrusions.<sup>5</sup>

In deciding to highlight the threats to religious freedom during an election year, the bishops may have recognized that such timing would increase the depth and breadth of public attention and potentially impact public discussion. In calling for “A Fortnight for Freedom,” the bishops prepared for the spotlight of public attention and seemed willing to stir up a good deal of controversy. This two-week campaign was designed to high-

light the threat to religious freedom in the United States and to galvanize simultaneously Catholic opposition to contraceptives. The dangers here were many, with both internal and external audiences. By the time the fortnight commenced on June 21, 2012 with an opening Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Baltimore, at least 70 of the nation's 190 dioceses had made plans to participate. The fortnight would close on the Fourth of July with numerous Independence Day commemorations and the tolling of bells at 12:00 noon EST at churches across the nation.<sup>6</sup>

A brief sampling of the discourse associated with the "Fortnight for Freedom" campaign helps underline its tenor and themes. Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia said: "Nothing guarantees our freedoms except our willingness to fight for them." Conveying the urgent need for forceful and immediate Catholic action, Chaput argued that that meant "fighting politically and through the courts without tiring and without apology."<sup>7</sup> Donald Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, D.C., also urged the call to spiritual and pragmatic arms: "There is a time to be on one's knees. There is also a time when we need to stand—to stand up. Today . . . we simply need to stand—to stand up for what is right, to stand up for what is ours, to stand up for freedom of religion." Charles Luckett, a third-year seminarian at the Theological College of The Catholic University of America offered his take on the need for action: "Our religious freedom is very important and is something that has been eroding for years. If we don't take a stand now, it will continue to collapse." A concerned parishioner, Patricia Kisicki of St. Patrick Parish in Rockville, Maryland, felt the campaign provided "a wonderful opportunity to be witnesses for our faith," She added: "It is very worrisome to think we could lose our freedom of religion."<sup>8</sup>

The political ramifications of the bishops' "Fortnight" campaign were made perfectly clear to Catholic voters. As Archbishop William Lori, Bridgeport, Connecticut, who headed the U.S. Catholic bishops religious liberty committee made clear: "The question to ask is this: Are any of the candidates of either party, or independents, standing for something that is intrinsically evil, evil no matter what the circumstances? If that's the case, a Catholic, regardless of his party affiliation, shouldn't be voting for such a person."<sup>9</sup>

As bishops and priests across the country promoted religious freedom, they sometimes made controversial partisan statements. At an Idaho state GOP convention, one priest prayed: “Dear Lord, I ask that on Tuesday, Nov. 7, you find a new job for President Obama.”<sup>10</sup> As election time grew near, some Roman Catholics may have grown a bit wary of what might have been interpreted as veiled threats from the church leadership. For example, Green Bay, Wisconsin Bishop David Ricken sent a letter warning parishioners that voting for candidates who supported “intrinsically evil” positions could “put your own soul in jeopardy.” Ricken added that the church had a responsibility to make itself heard in the public arena on moral issues. Ricken, however, in a nod to nonpartisanship consistent with Catholic teaching, did not endorse a particular party or specific candidates.<sup>11</sup>

In requiring religiously affiliated hospitals and universities to cover birth control in their health care plans, the Obama administration had overstepped its bounds, according to the bishops. However, the presumed attack on religious freedom was open to interpretation. Some Catholics were not convinced of either the urgency or the need for the bishops’ campaign. Some inevitably drew the conclusion that political rather than religious motives drove the bishops’ campaign. For example, Father Richard Rohr, a widely known and respected spiritual writer and sought-after retreat director, found the “Fortnight” campaign a diversion with a partisan flavor:

It really feels like bishops are shooting themselves in the foot by trying to divert attention away from our own problems and sins. Christian spirituality has always first sought spiritual freedom, inner freedom, freedom from self, freedom for love, and never did we expect governments to supply our “freedom” by any political mandate whatsoever. Our dear bishops are beginning to look like “the Republican party at prayer” more than men of the Gospel of Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

John Gehring, Catholic outreach coordinator with Faith in Public Life, a liberal religious advocacy group in Washington, said, “The bishops speak in hushed tones when it comes to poverty and economic justice issues and use a big megaphone when it comes to abortion and religious liberty issues.”<sup>13</sup>

The bishops’ very public arguments reinserted themselves into the culture wars. The topic of women’s rights and the charges of an attack on women were not merely charges made by Democrats against Republicans in

the 2012 election campaign. The bishops seemed to align themselves in this debate as well. In conducting overt opposition to the Obama administration policies in an election year, the bishops' stance seemed to be more in line with Republican views on abortion and marriage and family issues. Charges of a Republican "attack on women" gained more traction with the onset of outrageous and demeaning Republican statements on the topic of rape, including, among others, Missouri Republican Senate nominee Representative Todd Akin's comments on "legitimate rape" and Indiana Republican Senate candidate and State Treasurer Richard Mourdock's ill-conceived and offensive remark that if a woman becomes pregnant after being raped, it could be viewed as "something that God intended to happen."

Catholics and non-Catholics alike who agreed with the positions taken by the bishops in the wake of its challenge to HHS over Obama's health care provisions were also exposed to what a number of secular and religious observers alike had perceived as an additional form of an "attack on women" that had surfaced within Catholic Church circles. This occurred in the form of criticism against Catholic women religious in the United States whom the U.S. bishops characterized as strong on social justice, but less willing to defend what they identified as the "intrinsic evil" of abortion. As the "Nuns on the Bus" toured the nation's highways and byways in the summer of 2012 in an effort to highlight the inequities in Paul Ryan's budget proposals, arguing that they were merely acting as Jesus would act and addressing the hardships and inequities of being poor and disenfranchised in America, the U.S. Catholic bishops were seen by many as criticizing the nuns and endorsing a Republican-identified point of view.

This did not sit well with many women and men across the nation. The unfolding political narrative also became a bellwether for the kind of division that separated Roman Catholics in the United States. The media was quick to point out the differences between liberal and conservative Catholics, a divide that itself seemed to mirror the gulf between Republicans and Democrats in the United States. This was reinforced rather dramatically by the nation's two radically different Roman Catholic vice presidential candidates, whose presidential campaign debate highlighted a chasm in views, political ideology, and public policy stances. The graphic red and blue state divisions on the U.S. political map seemed to be playing themselves out symbolically in the mediated narratives proffered by a divided political landscape and an equally divided Roman Catholic religious community. In

one sense, this made Catholics just like other Americans. At the same time, the bishops' intense advocacy raised some fears that one religion's concept of the application of religious freedom might lead to a prescription for religious tyranny for those who may not hold to the beliefs and practices demanded by Roman Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Church, in particular, emerged as an engaged and interested party to what in the past had been left by the bishops to largely secular advocates.<sup>14</sup>

### INFLUENCING THE ELECTION: WITHER CONSENSUS

One inevitable question, of course, that suffused this religious-political environment was whether the bishops were trying to influence the election. The bishops reissued, as they had done before every presidential election cycle since 1976, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, a 30-page document that served as a guide for shaping Catholic consciences as a prelude to casting one's individual vote. Thus, Catholic conscience was to be exercised in the evaluation of public policy, party platforms, and candidate positions and promises against the principles of the Gospel and Catholic social teaching. In calling for "faithful citizenship," the bishops stressed the obligation of all Catholics to exercise moral judgment and act on behalf of the transformation of political society for the social good.<sup>15</sup> Prospects for consensus on the proper role and focus of Catholic citizens' political action, however, at this point in history, seem rather dim.

If one takes one's cue from the available recent numbers, division is normative in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. Catholics are divided over the role of government—by party affiliation and on social issues like same-sex marriage and abortion, to name a few. More than six-in-ten white Catholic moderates (63 percent) say they prefer a smaller government that provides fewer services over a bigger government that provides more services. Three-quarters of white Catholic conservatives express the same view. Among white Catholic liberals and Hispanic Catholics, however, roughly six-in-ten say they prefer a bigger government that provides more services. By party affiliation, Catholic liberals, Hispanics, and other minorities are "heavily" Democratic. Catholic moderates are more evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, but they lean toward the Democratic Party. Not surprisingly, Catholic conservatives are "heavily" Republican.

The same kinds of differences in political affiliation seem to apply to stances on social issues such as same sex marriage and abortion. Of white Catholic liberals, 77 percent support same-sex marriage; 65 percent of white Catholic moderates support same-sex marriage; while 55 percent of Hispanic Catholics support same-sex marriage, and 37 percent oppose it. This compares to 63 percent of white Catholic conservatives who oppose same-sex marriage. Two-thirds of white Catholic liberals express the view that abortion should be legal "in all or most cases." Approximately 60 percent of white Catholic moderates share this view. White Catholic conservatives have a markedly different opinion; 57 percent feel that abortion should be "illegal in most or all cases." Hispanic Catholics are divided on this issue with 50 percent saying abortion should be legal in most or all cases, and 45 percent saying it should be illegal in most or all cases.<sup>16</sup> With multiple media reports that 98 percent of Catholic women have employed contraceptives over their lifespan, it is not difficult for the casual observer to see a trend here: simply stated, the bishops' doctrinal views on marriage and family are being ignored by a large number of Catholics.<sup>17</sup>

The actual election results demonstrate that there is no monolithic Catholic stance on voting. Approximately 25 percent of all 2012 voters were Catholics, including 18 percent who were white Catholics and 5 percent who were Hispanic Catholics. Of all white Catholics, 59 percent voted for Romney, while 75 percent of Hispanic Catholics voted for Obama. Catholics as a whole split their overall vote with 50 percent voting for Obama and 48 percent voting for Romney.<sup>18</sup>

## EVALUATION

### *SHORING-UP A KEY CONSTITUENCY*

The bishops' "Fortnight" campaign seems to have been a way to shore up and encourage those constituencies that support the doctrinal teaching and remain "loyal" to Catholic principle and practice. Numbers on mass attendance may support such an assumption. Of white Catholic conservatives, 52 percent report they attend mass at least once a week. For white Catholic moderates, that percentage is 38 percent; it is 45 percent among Hispanics, and 39 percent among other minorities. Only 29 percent of white Catholic



liberals attend mass on a weekly basis.<sup>19</sup> In this era, those who attend church services more frequently would seem to be individuals the bishops might seek to encourage. The fact that those same individuals populate the suburban parishes and lend their significant financial support to the various missions of the church might be reason enough to initiate and mount doctrinal campaigns that appeal to white conservative Catholics, who by their common religious commitments and contributions are indeed holding up a significant pillar of the Catholic Church in the United States today.

A more capacious interpretive plane might suggest that religious pluralism may be playing a role in the bishops' efforts to carve out a new, or at least a more prominent and militant, constituency. As novelist Paul Elie has recently noted:

In America today Christianity is highly visible in public life but marginal or of no consequence in a great many individual lives. For the first time in our history it is possible to speak of Christianity matter-of-factly as one religion among many; for the first time it is possible to leave it out of the conversation altogether. This development places the believer on a frontier again, at the beginning of a new adventure; it means that the Christian who was born here is a stranger in a strange land no less than the Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Soviet Jews, and Spanish-speaking Catholics who have arrived from elsewhere. But few people see it that way. People of faith see decline and fall. Their detractors see a people threatening rear-guard political action, or a people left behind.<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, the sheer number of religions in combination with the force of secular influences may make any form of religious persuasion a difficult enterprise. In an age of division and intractable wrangling, many religious leaders and their flocks may not, in Elie's words, echoing those of Flannery O' Connor, "realize . . . just how hard it is to make belief believable."<sup>21</sup> Of course, another interpretation might take a different tack in our assessment of the bishops' efforts. In other words, they realize perfectly well how difficult their task is and they have doubled-down with the constituency that is most open to and supportive of their positions. Regardless of the above interpretations, where the truth of the matter may lie somewhere in between the two poles planted here, there is some reason to suspect that a siege mentality might have overtaken the bishops in the 2012 presidential election campaign and that the tiff with the Obama administration provided a propitious moment to rally a well-defined

constituency in the face of an increasingly dwindling population of the faithful and consistent Catholic churchgoers.

### *A NOTE OF NOSTALGIA*

In Catholic conservative circles, there seems to be an element of nostalgia. As one commentator notes, such "nostalgia is widespread" among prominent conservative Catholic writers. But many bishops also display this propensity. In a blog post, in my own archdiocese in Milwaukee, Archbishop Jerome Listecki recently shared his reflections with a longtime friend, a fellow priest and classmate: "I said to him, 'Tony, it seems at times to me that I have just dropped into another world. The culture has shifted so dramatically, that it's hardly recognizable. This is certainly not the world or society from my youth; the values we cherished have changed. The language we once used has taken on new meaning, and traits that we would have thought admirable, demeaned.' It was a sobering realization for both of us." Listecki complained of his pain at the world's "secularism—the loss of our dependency upon God." He lamented a world where: "Words like virginity, chastity, modesty, or marital faithfulness, once held in high esteem, are now scoffed or ridiculed." There is a kind of revivalistic fervor in his tone: "Whether on television or at the movies, we rarely ever see families or people going to church, let alone offering prayers before meals. . . . While there are numerous TV shows and films dramatizing the final days before devastating storms or meteor strikes, we hardly ever see anyone praying before the disasters strike. Hollywood wasn't always this way. Go back to the 1953 release, 'Titanic' and you'll see a stark contrast to the version from 1997. Even as the passengers faced imminent danger, we see and hear them gathered together, singing hymns to God as the great ship goes down." Listecki sounds like a man set adrift: "I am completely unfamiliar with the world represented in media today. . . . Modern culture is gutting Christianity, ignoring holiness and mystery. We must combat this indifference by following in the early martyrs' footsteps—witnessing to the faith by demonstrating that without religion and God, we are lost."<sup>22</sup>

Archbishop Listecki is hardly alone among today's bishops. As Eugene McCarragher, another Catholic observer notes: "Cardinal Dolan strolls rapturously down memory lane as well. Recalling his childhood to John Allen,

he evokes the pleasures of coming home from school to a cup of Mom's cocoa and chatting with Dad as he drank a beer. 'It was all coherent, wasn't it?' Dolan says. 'It all blended together.' This was life 'the way it was supposed to be, the way that Christopher Dawson speaks about Christendom in the Middle Ages—a kind of seamless, complete way of life that, at its best, felt more like a warm blanket than a choke collar.'" For McCarraher, this kind of discourse reveals the "conflation of a fabled suburban domesticity with a fabricated Middle Ages." Dolan's vision ignores an "historically contingent, mainly white ideal that made millions of people—especially women—unhappy." It also overlooks the fact that "medieval Christendom was no 'seamless' way of life, but rather a structure of fealty held together by a forcibly established church and riven by class struggle and incessant warfare, not to mention innumerable popular heresies and theological disputes." The kind of settled "consensus" represented in the bishops' views (longings?) ignores the fact that "more than half of all American Catholics favored the HHS mandate, and 60 percent believed that all employers, religious or not, should pay for contraceptive coverage." McCarraher finds in Dolan's wistful notes a "hybrid of American triumphalism and Catholic traditionalism."<sup>23</sup> Such a discourse may have significant appeal to white Catholic conservatives, but it may fall flat with white Catholic moderates and liberals, as well as the increasing Hispanic population and other minorities that constitute the future growth of both the Catholic Church and the general population in the United States. The election results seem to indicate that Obama did well with these latter groups, despite the U.S. Catholic bishops' positioning of Obama's health care mandates on contraception as "intrinsically evil." Times are changing. Only time will tell if the bishops appeal can hold fast and hold on to the future. If the appeal does hold, I wonder if the Catholic Church would then find itself in the early stages of reform, where by doctrine and predilection, a smaller, more conservative Church would begin to batten down the hatches and prepare its flock for the religious and cultural *sturm und drang* of a darkening, ever-present future storm. Will the bishops continue to find themselves "strangers in a strange land"?

#### NOTES

1. Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by the President in Commencement Address at the University of Notre Dame." University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, May 17,

2009. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Notre-Dame-Commencement/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Notre-Dame-Commencement/) (accessed December 2012).
2. The church's position on marriage and the family was reaffirmed in the controversial papal document *Humanae Vitae*, in which the church launched, in its words, "a new and deeper reflection upon the principles of the moral teaching on marriage: a teaching founded on the natural law, illuminated and enriched by divine revelation." Catholic teaching on natural law and marriage and family issues was argued from the following premises: "No believer will wish to deny that the teaching authority of the Church is competent to interpret even the natural moral law. . . . Christ . . . constituted [Peter and his Apostles] as guardians and authentic interpreters of all the moral law, not only, that is, of the law of the Gospel, but also of the natural law, which is also an expression of the will of God, the faithful fulfillment of which is equally necessary for salvation." "Conformably to this mission of hers, the Church has always provided—and even more amply in recent times—a coherent teaching concerning both the nature of marriage and the correct use of conjugal rights and the duties of husband and wife." See: "On the Regulation of Birth," *Humanae Vitae*. Encyclical letter of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, July 28, 1968. Papal Encyclicals online, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul06/p6humana.htm> (accessed January 2013).
  3. Laurie Goodstein, "Bishops Were Prepared for Battle over Birth Control Coverage," *New York Times*, February 9, 2012, [www.nytimes.com/2012/02/10/us/bishops-planned-battle-on-birth-control-coverage-rule.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/10/us/bishops-planned-battle-on-birth-control-coverage-rule.html) (accessed May, 2013).
  4. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Bishops Issue Call to Action to Defend Religious Liberty." News release, April 12, 2012, <http://www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-060.cfm> (accessed May 2012). The full document can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/our-first-most-cherished-liberty.cfm>.
  5. Interestingly, the bishops found a sympathetic ear and common cause with Protestant Evangelicals. One example is the joint statement "In Defense of Religious Liberty" issued by Evangelical and Catholics Together and published in the journal *First Things* in March 2012. This statement was signed by a prominent coalition of Catholics and Evangelicals, including such folks as Charles Colson and George Weigel. The document was also endorsed "in substance" by Timothy Cardinal Dolan and other Roman Catholic prelates. Signatories pledged "to work together for the renewal of religious freedom in our countries and around the world" and to "resist the legal pressure brought on Christians in the medical profession, the armed forces, and elsewhere to participate in actions that they deem immoral on the grounds of both faith and reason." The joint statement cautioned: "[W]e remind the modern

democratic state that it is a limited state. We applaud the United States Supreme Court's decision to sustain the long-held ministerial exception. In the same spirit of concern for religious liberty, we ask that legislators formulate explicit conscience protections for health-care workers. And we counsel legislators to intervene and reverse the coercive efforts at the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies to mandate health coverage and adoption procedures that will force religious institutions to betray their foundational principles. In these and other areas, we must vigilantly defend religious freedom." See: "Evangelicals and Catholics Together, 'In Defense of Religious Freedom,'" *First Things*, March 2012, <http://www.firstthings.com/issue/2012/03/march> (accessed December 2012). The web site indicates: "FIRST THINGS is published by The Institute on Religion and Public Life, an interreligious, nonpartisan research and education institute whose purpose is to advance a religiously informed public philosophy for the ordering of society." *First Things'* founding editor was the late Lutheran, turned Roman Catholic neo-conservative priest and theologian Richard John Neuhaus. There were earlier ecumenical documents that had built alliances and cooperation between Catholics and Evangelicals in the 1990s and early 2000s. For the first of those earlier documents that served as a preface to the document cited previously, see: "Evangelicals & Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," *First Things*, May 1994, <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/01/evangelicals-catholics-together-the-christian-mission-in-the-third-millennium-2> (accessed December 2012).

6. Jerry Filteau and Dennis Coday, "Diversity Shows at Bishops' Meeting," *National Catholic Reporter*, July 2, 2012, <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/diversity-shows-bishops-meeting> (accessed December 2012). For further coverage describing the rallies held around the nation, see for example: Maureen Boyle and Catholic News Service, "Washington Rally Gathers 2,000 In Support of Religious Freedom," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 27, 2012, <http://ncronline.org/news/politics/washington-rally-gathers-2000-support-religious-freedom> (accessed November 2012); Catholic News Service, "Catholics Around the Country Rally for Religious Freedom," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 13, 2012, <http://ncronline.org/news/politics/catholics-around-country-rally-religious-freedom> (accessed January 2013).
7. Dennis Coday, "Chaput: We will lose religious freedom if we don't fight for it," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 21, 2012, <http://ncronline.org/news/politics/chaput-we-will-lose-religious-freedom-if-we-dont-fight-it> (accessed November 2012).
8. All three quotations drawn from Boyle and Catholic News Service, "Washington Rally Gathers 2,000."

9. Kathryn Jean Lopez, "Dolan: Ryan Is a 'Great Public Servant,'" *National Review Online*, August 17, 2012, <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/314272/dolan-ryan-great-public-servant-kathryn-jean-lopez> (accessed November 2012).
10. Tom Gallagher, "At GOP convention, Idaho Priest Prays for Obama's Defeat," *National Catholic Reporter*, June 27, 2012, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/gop-convention-idaho-priest-prays-obamas-defeat> (accessed August 2012).
11. Associated Press, "Green Bay Bishop: Voters Could put 'Soul in Jeopardy,'" *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 26, 2012, <http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/green-bay-bishop-voters-could-put-soul-in-jeopardy-jm7cde2-176052161.html> (accessed November 2012).
12. Joshua J. McElwee, "Richard Rohr Criticizes 'Fortnight for Freedom,'" *National Catholic Reporter*, June 25, 2012, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/richard-rohr-criticizes-fortnight-freedom> (accessed October 2012). Rohr's comments regarding the campaign, posted June 23, 2012, appeared on his personal blog.
13. Laurie Goodstein, "Bishops Open 'Religious Liberty' Drive," *New York Times*, November 14, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/15/us/bishops-renew-fight-on-abortion-and-gay-marriage.html?\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/15/us/bishops-renew-fight-on-abortion-and-gay-marriage.html?_r=1&) (accessed December 2012).
14. Not since the bishops' intervention in the question of nuclear arms with the onset of the Reagan administration could many Catholics remember the bishops taking on such a public political stance. In the early 1980s, the U.S. Catholic bishops, in issuing their pastoral letter on nuclear arms, seemed to many observers to be endorsing the nuclear freeze movement and, thus, "siding" with the Democratic Party. See George Cheney and Steve Goldzwig, "The U.S. Catholic Bishops on Nuclear Arms: Corporate Advocacy, Role Redefinition, and Rhetorical Adaptation," *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984): 8–23. A renewed sense of skepticism regarding the bishops' proclaimed nonpartisanship also emerged when New York's Timothy Cardinal Dolan was tapped to deliver the benediction at the Republican National Convention. After some mediated complaints, Dolan also appeared in the same role at the Democratic National convention. He emphasized that his appearance at both conventions was nonpartisan.
15. Many Catholic moderates were pleased with the 2011 document because it was not rewritten for the 2012 election campaign—moderates feared the bishops would veer right in response to the 2010 midterm elections that had demonstrated the additional inroads made by Tea Party candidates. Rather, the bishops merely added a two-page introduction and published the document largely as it appeared in 2008. As one Catholic official opined anonymously: "Democrats can't ignore abortion and gay marriage," and "Republicans can't say that's all that matters." Of course, that sounded good in theory. One might question as to whether that was how, on balance, it all

- played out. There is some question as to whether this document on Catholic conscience for evaluating political society had much influence. As the 2012 election campaign was beginning to gain momentum, one poll indicated that only 16 percent of Catholics had heard of the bishops' document on *Faithful Citizenship*, and only three percent indicated they had read the statement in past election cycles. This did not bode well for its presumed efficacy. See David Gibson and Religion News Service, "Bishops Warn that Church Teaching Is Nonpartisan," *National Catholic Reporter*, October 5, 2011. <http://ncronline.org/news/politics/bishops-warn-church-teaching-nonpartisan> (accessed December 2012).
16. "The Catholic 'Swing' Vote," *PEW Forum on Religion and Public Life*, October 11, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/The-Catholic-Swing-Vote.aspx> (accessed January 2013).
  17. Lisa Miller, "In the Contraception Furor, the Loud Voices of a Few Threaten Revolutionary Gains of All U.S. Women," *Washington Post*, February 9, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/in-birth-control-debate-whose-conscience-will-rule/2012/02/09/gIQAoetSIQ\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/in-birth-control-debate-whose-conscience-will-rule/2012/02/09/gIQAoetSIQ_story.html) (accessed November 2012). For a more thorough discussion of this claim, see Glenn Kessler, "The Claim that 98 percent of Catholic Women Use Contraception: A Media Foul," *Washington Post*, February 17, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/the-claim-that-98-percent-of-catholic-women-use-contraception-a-media-foul/2012/02/16/gIQAkPeqIR\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/fact-checker/post/the-claim-that-98-percent-of-catholic-women-use-contraception-a-media-foul/2012/02/16/gIQAkPeqIR_blog.html) (accessed November 2012).
  18. "How the Faithful Voted: 2012 Preliminary Analysis," *PEW Forum on Religion and Public Life*, November 7, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/How-the-Faithful-Voted-2012-Preliminary-Exit-Poll-Analysis.aspx> (accessed November 2012). Cardinal Dolan is certainly aware of the import of the conservative Catholic vote and seems to understand, if not endorse, candidates favorable to this constituency: "The polls show that Catholics voted for the president, but that such support was lower than four years ago; and that Catholics who attend Sunday Mass regularly heavily supported his opponent. These statistics would support a contention that Catholics do indeed let their faith have a say in their politics." Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, "Looking Back at Election Day," *Catholic New York*, November 15, 2012, <http://cny.org/stories/Looking-Back-at-Election-Day,8444> (accessed November 2012).
  19. "The Catholic 'Swing Vote.'" In addition, Catholic attendance at religious services is correlated to voting practices: "Catholic voters who attend church regularly are more than twice as likely as Protestants to report being urged to vote a certain way. (11% vs. 4%). Among white Catholics, 13% say they were urged to vote a particular way by their clergy, compared with 5% of white evangelical Protestants and 3% of white mainline

- Protestants." Interestingly, "Among Catholic voters overall, 6% say they were encouraged by their clergy to vote for Republican candidates, while none say they were urged to vote for Democratic candidates." "Low Marks for the 2012 Election: Voters Pessimistic About Partisan Cooperation. Section 3: The Voting Process and the Accuracy of the Vote," *PEW Center for People & the Press*, November, 15, 2012, <http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/15/section-3-the-voting-process-and-the-accuracy-of-the-vote/#worship> (accessed November 2012).
20. Paul Elie, "Has Fiction Lost Its Faith?" *New York Times*, December 19, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/23/books/review/has-fiction-lost-its-faith.html?ref=books&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/23/books/review/has-fiction-lost-its-faith.html?ref=books&_r=0) (accessed December 2012).
  21. Paul Elie, "Has Fiction Lost Its Faith?"
  22. Most Reverend Jerome E. Listecki, "Without God, We are Lost," July 18, 2012. "This blog post originally appeared as a special July 17, 2012 'Love One Another' email sent to Catholics throughout the Archdiocese of Milwaukee by Archbishop Listecki," <http://www.archmil.org/Our-Faith/Blogs/Archbishop-Listeck/JEL-20120718.htm> (accessed August 2012).
  23. Eugene McCarragher, "Morbid Symptoms: The Catholic Right's False Nostalgia." *Commonweal*, November 23, 2012. <http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/morbid-symptoms> (accessed November 2012).