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# The Sleeping Giant

by

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In the immediate post World War II period there was a historical resurgence of Christian democratic political sentiment in Western Europe. Led by Georges Bidault in France, Alcide de Gaspaari in Italy and Konrad Adenauer in Germany, dominant parties founded on adherence to Christian democratic natural law concepts energized a spiritual renaissance amid the rubble and destruction of bombed-out combatant nations. The material reconstruction of Western Europe was, of course, the result of massive infusions of financial and technical assistance through the American Marshall Plan. The rehabilitation of Western Europe was more than just a matter of brick and mortar however, since particularly among the defeated participants Germany, Italy, and France (so ignominiously subjugated by the Germans early in the war) there was a need for spiritual recovery as well. To overcome the despair and the ennui of post-war disillusionment, the revitalization of Christian political doctrine and participation was crucial. This was obtunded by the Russian occupation of Eastern Europe including East Germany but there was at least a brief period in which traditional Christian nations coalesced into an entity dedicated to the reclamation of national ideals so cruelly suppressed during the hostilities.

A similar opportunity now presents itself in the 21st century aftermath of the culture wars in the United States, which began in the turbulent 1960s with anti-Vietnam protests, peaked in the 1970s with militant feminism and *Roe v. Wade* and was exacerbated in the 1990s with the rise of homosexual activism and attacks on the institution of marriage.

The 2004 election was a watershed event in which Evangelical Protestants and observant Catholics found common ground in public policies aimed at reclaiming Christian values in the public square. The Christian electorate realized the necessity of putting aside differences in

theology to protect their shared values and their agreement on social issues. It must be conceded that Evangelical Protestant churches were much more effective in energizing their congregations despite the fact that they had traditionally been reluctant to get involved in the political process. Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family discovered that 57% of Christians on his mailing list were not even registered to vote. He worked tirelessly through his radio programs, publications and personal appearances, to educate his followers about the crucial nature of the election for the preservation of family values. His efforts were highly successful. In one city, Portland, Oregon, his personal appearance was instrumental in registering 200,000 new Christian voters. Evangelical Protestants voted 71 to 29% for Bush.

Because of the contrast between the two candidates on life issues and homosexual marriage, Catholic voters deserted their Democratic party roots to vote 54% for Bush. Observant Catholics who were regular churchgoers went 59% for Bush. This, of course, does not have anything to do with any indoctrination on Sanctity of Life issues through homiletics or church centered education. Aside from a few outspoken, courageous voices like Bishops Burke, Chaput Myers, Bruskiewicz and others, the NCCB was largely silent because of a reluctance to draw further negative attention to themselves, or more realistically, disinclination to risk the loss of tax exemption.

The mainline Protestant churches have been described as the Democratic Party at prayer. Most bishops and their discredited legal advisors are unable to make the important distinction between educating on the issues and electioneering. The bishop in my own vicariate sent faxed messages to all the pastors warning them against passing out materials to educate parishioners on the records of candidates on pro-family issues and my pastor refused permission even to having a single sign which read "Vote Pro-Life" placed within parish grounds. The level of vincible ignorance on the realities of the laws applying to political activity in tax-exempt organizations among the bishops and clergy is scandalous and deplorable. The Catholic electorate remains a sleeping giant quite capable of being energized as much if not more than Protestant congregations. The Catholic Church, including the hierarchy, in responding to political attempts to liberalize and then to overturn abortion laws in the early 1970s was courageous and exemplary. There is a strong residue of this pro-life activism among blue collar workers, Hispanics and African-Americans despite the fact that these constituents tend to vote for pro-abortion Democrats.

The Democratic Party, which has depended on a coalition of labor unions, radical feminists, homosexual activists and strong majorities in the Jewish and African-American communities, seems now to realize that it

must reach out to observant Christians in order to avoid becoming an entrenched minority party.

The National Council of Churches and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have begun to push for a new organization called Christian Churches Together. Realistically, however, Christian laymen have every reason to despair of the possibility that the officialdom of any Christian church, including the Catholic Church, can ever really come to grips with the abortion frenzy, radical feminism or gay activism. Even a major world issue like Islamic fundamentalism is confused by misplaced pacifism among church leaders.

What is needed is a coming together of Christian lay people in political activism aimed toward the establishment of a Culture of Life and the Sanctity of Marriage.

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