

## Vatican, U.S. prelate split on Obama performance?

Thomas C. Fox | May. 22, 2009 NCR Today

It seems there *is* something to the split between Vatican perceptions of President Obama's early presidency, on the one hand, and the perceptions of the most outspoken anti-Obama-ist U.S. Catholic bishops, on the other hand.

NCR's John Allen takes a look in his column this week.

[Here's what Allen writes:](#) [1]

*L'Osservatore* carried a brief news story about the Obama speech at the top of page three on Monday.

"The search for common ground: that seems to be the path chosen by the President of the United States, Barack Obama, in dealing with the delicate question of abortion," the *L'Osservatore* piece began. "Setting aside the inflammatory tone of the electoral campaign, Obama yesterday confirmed what he had said during a press conference after his first 100 days in the White House when he affirmed that launching a new law on abortion is not a priority of his administration."

The article makes indirect reference to the controversy surrounding Obama's appearance at Notre Dame, but never cites any of the American bishops who criticized the university. It quotes favorably from Obama's address.

Catholic News Service has also caught the drift and [published an article today mentioning](#) [2] the subject:

*L'Osservatore* did not report on the bishops' criticism in the run-up to the Notre Dame event. In its article on the president's speech, it noted the protests but emphasized Obama's call for "common ground," as well as his commitment to reducing the number of abortions and finding an acceptable "conscience clause" for medical personnel opposed to abortion.

That caused some discomfort among conservative Catholics, but Vian defended the editorial line May 20 in an interview with the Italian daily "*Il Riformista*." Vian said that the U.S. president's Notre Dame speech was "respectful" and left him convinced that "Obama is not a pro-abortion president."

Twice, the newspaper has opined that Obama seems to have moved away from his 2008 campaign rhetoric on legislation that would enshrine abortion as a fundamental right and remove local limitations on the practice of abortion.

Stay tuned.

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