NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Imbelli on ND

Tom Roberts | May. 27, 2009 NCR Today

As the introduction by noted Italian journalist Sandro Magister puts it, theologian Fr. Robert Imbelli provides an even handed treatment [1]in his online commentary in the Italian publication Chieasa of the speeches by both President Barack Obama and Judge John Noonan during the commencement exercises at the University of Notre Dame.

Fr. Imbelli, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York who teaches theology at Boston College and writes regularly for Commonweal magazine, laments that neither speech was adequately analyzed in the wider press, He perceives reasons to believe that both speeches dared to go beyond the overheated rhetoric of the moment; that they even dared to consider matters of conscience and conversion at a level rarely approached in commencement addresses or the political arena.

Two excerpts:

> ?Thus, though on one level the President appeared primarily focused on respectful dialogue and ?fair-minded words;? on a deeper level he seemed to be in search of binding principles that were, perhaps, at variance with his own stated positions. Indeed, these principles, if given full scope, might even lead the President (not without personal cost) to reconsider some of the practices he currently endorses.?
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> ??.In a generous tribute, President Obama called Notre Dame ?a lighthouse that stands apart, shining with the wisdom of the Catholic tradition.? A fine representative of that Catholic wisdom tradition is Judge John Noonan who gave the Laetare Address, replacing Ambassador Glendon. It is unfortunate that his measured address received hardly any mention in the media accounts, obsessed as they are with celebrity and conflict. But his remarks, brief and respectful, yet pointed, deserve close attention. His was a soft, gentle voice, like the whisper of conscience.?

Imbelli?s is a welcome voice of reason and thoughtful analysis, particularly given the loud protests being delivered around Rome by the neoconservative Catholic triumvirate of George Weigel, Michael Novak and Deal Hudson. Magister details what they?ve been saying and where. Their behavior is rather unbecoming, if revealing. They come so utterly unwound at the slightest variance by church officials from what they insist should be the proper reading of U.S. history, the exclusively orthodox take on Obama and the only possible political strategy for Catholics in dealing with abortion.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/03/2015 - 00:52*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/imbelli-nd

Links:
[1] http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1338633?eng=y