

L'Osservatore: Make no mistake, we are pro-life

John Thavis Catholic News Service | Jun. 8, 2009

VATICAN CITY -- The Vatican newspaper has again emphasized that when it comes to the Obama administration and pro-life issues, the Vatican and the U.S. bishops are in full agreement and that no compromise is possible on the right to life.

The newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, said it was a mistake to view its press coverage of Obama -- which has been positive on many issues -- as evidence that the Vatican is following a "different strategy" than the U.S. bishops in dealing with the new administration.

The comments came in the newspaper's June 5 edition, in an article criticizing the Obama administration's restoration of federal funding for embryonic stem-cell research.

The newspaper appeared to be defending itself against accusations by some U.S. Catholic commentators that its editorial line was too soft on Obama.

In one of the latest critiques, Michael Novak, director of social and political studies at the American Enterprise Institute, wrote in *National Review Online* May 26 that *L'Osservatore* had "published glowing, star-struck, teenage praise of President Barack Obama" and "seems not to grasp the fundamental realities of abortion politics in America."

The Vatican newspaper said it wanted to underline that "in reporting on recent statements and initiatives of the president of the United States, *L'Osservatore Romano* has certainly not intended to express appreciation for his positions on questions of ethical importance."

"Obviously the Holy See and *L'Osservatore Romano* have been, are and will be fully at the side of the U.S. bishops in their commitment in favor of the inviolability of human life in whatever stage of its existence," it said.

The commentary said it would be wrong to interpret the newspaper's articles as a sign that it viewed the U.S. bishops' anti-abortion campaign as an exercise in partisan politics. Nor was the Vatican following a "different strategy" than that used by U.S. bishops when it came to the inherent evil of abortion, it said.

The newspaper said Obama has shown himself to be open to dialogue and that U.S. bishops have welcomed this possibility in a positive manner. But in doing so, it said, "they have reaffirmed, and quite rightly, that in dialogue no compromise is ever possible on the fundamental question of the right to life."

In May, a similar statement came from *L'Osservatore* editor Giovanni Maria Vian, who said: "It should be understood that *L'Osservatore* shares the same position as the American bishops who consider abortion a disaster. It is always a necessary and decisive task, in fact, to promote a culture of life at every level."

At the same time, Vian has said that, despite obvious differences with the new administration on pro-life issues, he does not consider Obama a "pro-abortion president," and his newspaper has emphasized Obama's declared

commitment to reducing the number of abortions.

The latest statement from *L'Osservatore* came at the end of an article that ran on an inside page. The same day, the newspaper published a front-page article giving good marks to Obama's speech to the Arab world in Cairo.

Pope Benedict XVI and the president and expected to meet in July.

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