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Catholic Democrat group hits K of C attack on Biden

Thomas C. Fox | Sep. 25, 2008

Catholic Democrats, a state-based network of groups representing a Catholic voice within the Democratic Party, has decried as "hypocritical and partisan" an attack by Carl Anderson, national head of the Knights of Columbus, on Sen. Joseph Biden, the Democratic vice presidential candidate.

In an **open letter** [1] that ran as full-page advertisements in several major U.S. daily newspapers, Anderson attacked Biden?s Catholicism, the action stemming from comments the senator had made about abortion. Anderson compared the vice presidential candidate's views on abortion to those of pre-Civil War advocates of slavery.

The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic fraternal organization. Anderson is the group's Supreme Knight.

Anderson, a former Reagan administration official, "grossly mischaracterized Sen. Biden as an advocate of abortion while carelessly ignoring the racial overtones of invoking slavery in attacking the running mate of history's first black presidential nominee," Catholic Democrats said.

Anderson's comments were motivated by Biden's appearance Sept. 7 on "Meet the Press" in which Biden spoke about Obama's intention to support measures that would reduce abortions in America.

See also: **Anderson invites Biden to talk about abortion views** [2].

"These are measures that were called for in the 20th U.S. bishops' Faithful Citizenship document issued at the beginning of the presidential campaign last fall," Catholic Democrats said.

The statement said that Anderson?s letter "completely ignores the common ground with American Catholics" that the Democratic candidates detailed in their party platform.

"It is sacrilegious for Mr. Anderson, someone who holds himself up as a flag bearer for the values and virtue of our faith, to use his shared Catholic identity with Sen. Biden as a foil to attack him for blatantly political purposes," said Dr. Patrick Whelan, president of Catholic Democrats.

"The (Anderson) letter ignores Sen. Biden's strong commitment to Catholic social teaching, reflected in legislation he was instrumental in passing, including: the United States Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983, the Global Climate Change Act in 1987, Stopping Genocide in Bosnia, Kosovo and Darfur in 1993 and 2004 respectively, and the Kids 2000 Act [in 2000] among many others during his 25 years of service as U.S. senator."

Anderson said he wrote the letter "on behalf of 1.28 million members of the Knights of Columbus and their families in the United States."

However, Thomas P. O'Neill III, former lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, is at least one Catholic to take exception: "As a member of the Knights of Columbus, I want to make it clear that Carl Anderson does not speak for me. For 125 years, the Knights have stood for solidarity and for aiding those in need. These statements, transparently promoting the McCain candidacy and by extension all the moral failures of the Bush years, do not reflect our Catholic tradition. Instead they risk making the Knights a tool of political partisanship at a time when the Knights can, and should, be focusing on the church's greatest gift to our country, the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching."

On "Meet the Press," Biden said: "I'm prepared as a matter of faith to accept that life begins at the moment of conception. But that is my judgment. For me to impose that judgment on everyone else who is equally and maybe even more devout than I am seems to me is inappropriate in a pluralistic society."

Anderson? letter echoed the remarks of a number of bishops who said Biden?s thoughts did not tally with Catholic teachings on abortion.

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