

Camelot's End

Michael Sean Winters | Jan. 19, 2011 | Distinctly Catholic

There is nothing I can add to [Colman McCarthy's beautiful tribute](#) [1] to Sargent Shriver. It seems fitting, however, that Shriver went to his heavenly reward just days before the 50th anniversary of President Kennedy's inauguration as President.

This past weekend, while flipping channels, I came across a rebroadcast of Kennedy's Inaugural Ceremony on C-Span. How different the temper of the times were then from today! The call to sacrifice and service has vanished from our political speech. The sense of national possibility and purpose is a rare commodity. This is the first Congress in more than fifty years in which no member of the Kennedy clan is serving in the U.S. Congress and although the heirs to Camelot, too, lacked the forceful vision of JFK it is sad to think that this family which personified public service is not represented in either chamber of our national legislature. The good works of the Kennedy family remain. Would we have achieved health care reform without Ted Kennedy's years of vocal advocacy for it? The Civil Rights Bills of the 1960s would not have been passed without Lyndon Johnson's arm-twisting, but they also would not have been passed if JFK had not brought African-Americans en masse into the Democratic Party, a feat he achieved largely by calling Coretta Scott King to inquire about her imprisoned husband in the weeks before the 1960 election. The Peace Corps continues its good works abroad, despite the occasional controversy. The non-political efforts of the Kennedy clan are scarcely less remarkable, most notably Special Olympics.

The legacy of Camelot is a proud one, undimmed by time. To whom will the torch be passed now?

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Links:

[1] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/18/AR2011011804789.html?hpid=opinionsbox1>