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\\"Politics is perception\"

by Sr. Rose Pacatte

NCR Today

Although Republican Gov. Chris Christie, 48, of New Jersey has said emphatically that he is not running for president, the television networks love him. True, his standing in the polls took a hit when his budget deal passed in the state legislature this week, but last Sunday morning on "Meet the Press" moderator David Gregory questioned Christie's blunt style and Christie called himself "huggable and loveable." He also said he would endorse the most authentic Republican candidate who would run for president in 2012

In Rob Reiner's 1995 romcom "The American President," Leo Solomon, played by John Mahoney of "Frasier" fame, heads a lobbying firm in D.C. He scolds the high-powered and overpriced lobbyist he just hired to convince Congress to oppose the president. She is Sydney Ellen Wade, played by Annette Bening, and she was the date of President Andrew Shepherd, played by Michael Douglas, the night before at a White House state dinner.

Sydney, paid to oppose the president, was in the morning newspaper, shown dancing with the president. Why is Leo Solomon so upset? Because "politics is perception."

Two images that lead to perceptions of human authenticity in political leaders have emerged in the last weeks -- just as the political landscape broadens for the 2012 national elections.

Perhaps you saw this YouTube video about 3-year-old Jesse, who, on the way home from the polls where his parents had voted, lamented that he was too young to be the governor of New Jersey.

The parents eventually uploaded the video and it made its way to New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and in April, he invited Jesse, now five, his twin brother Brandon and parents to the state house where Jesse was named governor of the day and Brandon the lieutenant governor for the day.

Try to not like Gov. Christie now. I dare you.

Earlier this month, while President Obama and the first lady were greeting people on the White House lawn, a baby started wailing. The President held the baby and she stopped crying -- immediately. As a blogger for *The Village Voice* notes, it's hard to put a negative spin on this or believe it was a setup -- even Michelle looks shocked.

Try not to like President Obama now. I dare you.

Aaron Sorkin wrote the script for "The American President" and then created "The West Wing" for which he wrote 154 episodes from 1999 - 2006. Sorkin showed audiences his political vision that he wanted us to perceive.

Now we can choose other people's perceptions on YouTube, the Internet, and/or print, radio or television news -- or we can create and post our own.

We can also question every political image and message -- it is our democratic right to do so just as it is an imperative for disciples and citizens. Then we can decide who is the most authentic candidate ourselves.

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Meanwhile, a week after Father's Day, it's really hard not to like either of these two political dads. They sure seem authentic with the kids.

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