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

Obama says faith mandates him to care for the poor

Lauren Markoe Religion News Service | Feb. 3, 2012

WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama connected his faith with his policies toward the poor at the National Prayer Breakfast on Thursday, a subtle but sharp contrast to remarks made by presidential hopeful Mitt Romney the day before.

"Living by the principle that we are our brother's keeper. Caring for the poor and those in need," Obama said before an audience of about 3,000 at the Washington Hilton. These values, he said, "they're the ones that have defined my own faith journey."

Specifically, Obama said, they translate to policies that support research to fight disease and support foreign aid. His faith, he continued, inspires him "to give up some of the tax breaks that I enjoy."

Romney has come under fire for telling CNN on Wednesday that "I'm not concerned about the very poor," but is instead focused on the middle class. He later said his remarks were taken out of context, and promised to fix any holes in the safety net protecting the impoverished.

Romney, who made his fortune as the CEO of Bain Capital, is seeking to counter critics who portray him as a "vulture capitalist." Recently he released his tax returns, which showed his income at nearly $21 million last year and that he paid a lower tax rate than most Americans.

The 60th annual prayer breakfast is a bipartisan event sponsored by members of Congress who meet weekly for prayer when Congress is in session.

Flanked by first lady Michelle Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, Obama talked about his largely secular upbringing, and "finding Christ when I wasn't even looking for him so many years ago."

Obama did not mention recent tensions between the White House and Catholic and evangelical leaders over new rules that will mandate nearly all religious institutions to offer coverage for contraception to their employees.

Late Wednesday, Cecelia Munoz, the director of the White House Domestic Policy Council and a former staffer for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, sought to clarify what she called "confusion" over the contraception mandate.

"The Obama administration is committed to both respecting religious beliefs and increasing access to important preventive services," she wrote in a White House blog post. "And as we move forward, our strong partnerships with religious organizations will continue."

Obama shared the dais with Christian author and humorist Eric Metaxas, who asked the audience to forsake "phony" religiosity and to recognize the humanity in their political foes.

"If you can see Jesus in your enemy, then you know you are seeing through God's eyes and not your own,"

Metaxas said.

Source URL (retrieved on *02/08/2016 - 19:42*): http://ncronline.org/news/politics/obama-says-faith-mandates-him-care-poor