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Alfred E. Smith Dinner a huge success

Tom Gallagher | Oct. 19, 2012 NCR Today

President Barack Obama and Gov. Mitt Romney attended the 67th annual Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation dinner last evening at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in midtown Manhattan. By all accounts, it was a huge success and raised more than $5 million for children's charities.

For a brief break in a contentious presidential campaign, Obama and Romney gathered with New York's wealthiest and powerful for an evening of good-natured jokes and a meal.

The Huffington Post has a good story [1] on the event, plus dozens of pictures of the laughter and affair.

The New York Times' story can be found here [2], plus videos of each speech.

Michael Goodwin of the *New York Post* writes [3]:

> But inside the grace-filled glitter palace of the Waldorf-Astoria last night, President Obama and Mitt Romney shared a stage, a meal and stood united in homage to the eternal values of a singular nation.
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> Instead of going for the jugular, the annual Al Smith charity dinner had them going for laughs -- and both came away a winner. Less than 48 hours after they ripped each other in a debate, they turned backstabs into backslaps and insults into jokes.
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> Romney began his 10 minutes at the microphone by poking fun at his wealth, saying that the elaborate gowns for women and formal tails for men made him comfortable because "it's what Ann and I wear around the house."
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> The president showed he can laugh at himself, too, saying he had much more energy in the second debate "because of the nice, long nap I had in the first one."
>
> Great credit goes to Cardinal Dolan, who sat between the erstwhile warriors during dinner and acted as chaperone and buffer all night. The three stood together in the receiving line, then shared squirts of Purell hand sanitizer, a witness said.
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> With distinct Irish-American overtones, Dolan channeled the spirit of Al Smith, the former governor of New York, who in 1928, became the first Roman Catholic to be the presidential nominee of a major party. Recalling that Smith, who lost to Herbert Hoover, was called "the happy warrior," Dolan reminded the audience of 1,600 people that the church believes that "joy is the infallible sign of God's presence."
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> In that case, He was everywhere. Smith's great-grandson, also named Al, set the tone. He raised a Big Gulp cup to Mayor Bloomberg and said Gov. Cuomo's ambition reminded him of the ominous music from "Jaws."

He took double aim at Romney's family. Noting that Romney's father was born in Mexico and that the Romneys have five sons, he deadpanned, "Are you sure you're not Catholic?"

A minute later, he looked at Obama and said, "Your opponent produced more sons than you did jobs."

Then the candidates did their own comic routine. Of the president, Romney said that, as his term runs out, the president is thinking "so little time, so much to redistribute."

He turned the teaching that St. Peter built the church into a zinger, saying skeptics declared, "You didn't build that."

For more on the foundation, click here [4].

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[1] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/18/obama-al-smith-dinner_n_1983589.html#slide=1659641r
[2] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/19/us/politics/obama-romney-roast-each-other-at-al-smith-charity-dinner.html?hp&_r=0
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