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The M-word at the Republican convention

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The Republican National Convention convenes today. You can be sure, in this party where conservative Evangelicals are a key part of the base, that religion will play an important part. There will be an opening prayer from a Hispanic evangelical and a closing -- and highly controversial -- benediction from Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

There will be prayers for those in the path of Hurricane Isaac, mumbles about the importance of religious liberty, and a full-throated defense of the conservative positions in the "culture wars" -- unless, of course, you use phrases like "legitimate rape" or suggest women who are raped cannot get pregnant. The ghost of Congressman Todd Akin floats in the hall.

Be that as it may, it will be interesting to see how the M-word -- Mormon -- is handled. Will Ann Romney or Mitt Romney himself say anything significant about this important part of Mitt's upbringing? After all, he is not just an ordinary pew-sitting Mormon. He went on a Mormon mission in France for two years and was the "bishop" (i.e., pastor) of his church in Massachusetts for several years. (Note that Mormons do not have a formal clergy; laymen, and I do mean only men, take that role.)

So it is important that someone address this directly. The anti-Mormon sentiment among some groups in this country is a real violation of religious liberty and a species of intolerance. It would be good to hear someone talk about the values that faith shares with other religious traditions.

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