



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on November 3, 2009

Catholic Bishops: The Faithful Should Not Support Current Healthcare Reform Bills

Upset about the inclusion of abortion funding and mandates in the healthcare reform bills currently before Congress, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is blanketing 19,000 parishes across the nation with a bulletin insert instructing the faithful to oppose the bills in their present form.

The USCCB relates the substance of the insert in a news release, [writing](#):

"Health care reform should be about saving lives, not destroying them," the insert states. It urges readers to contact Senate leaders so they support efforts to "incorporate longstanding policies against abortion funding and in favor of conscience rights" in health reform legislation.



"If these serious concerns are not addressed, the final bill should be opposed," it adds.

In issuing this statement about the Democrats' aggressive pro-abortion positions and policies, the American bishops add to a burgeoning list of priests and prelates who have voiced such opposition. For example, shortly after the 2008 election, two priests [made news](#) by informing their parishes that having cast a vote for Obama could be a mortal sin. One of them, Rev. Jay Scott Newman of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Greenville, S.C., explained the gravity of the act in a letter to his parishioners, writing:

Voting for a pro-abortion politician when a plausible pro-life alternative exists constitutes material cooperation with intrinsic evil, and those Catholics who do so place themselves outside of the full communion of Christ's Church and under the judgment of divine law. Persons in this condition should not receive Holy Communion until and unless they are reconciled to God in the Sacrament of Penance, lest they eat and drink their own condemnation.

Rev. Newman also called Obama "the most radical pro-abortion politician ever to serve in the United States Senate," prompting critics to call the priest a radical. Yet Newman was simply enunciating Church teaching. This is why not only was he [backed up](#) by his diocese, but a high Vatican official, Archbishop Raymond Burke, [echoed the teaching](#) in March of this year. As for Burke, he continued his defense of life and implicit criticism of Obama after Notre Dame University invited the President to give its commencement speech, [saying](#) that the school had betrayed its Catholic identity.

Yet such pronouncements don't sit well with some. For example, criticizing Rev. Newman in the *Washington Post*, David Waters [wrote](#):

Newman is denying communion not to those who have conducted or received an abortion, and



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not to those who enact laws that allow for abortion, but to those who cast a vote for a candidate who supports abortion rights. In effect, he's saying that thinking is now mortal sin. He's saying that having an opinion is a mortal sin. He's saying that freedom of speech and thought is a mortal sin.

I wonder what would happen if parishioners could elect their own priests.

I can answer that question. The priesthood would look a lot like Congress — just picture Nancy Pelosi in a vestment and you'll get the idea. I'm sure this would suit Waters just fine, but it's why few entities within society are one-man-one-vote democracies.

As for Waters' main argument, it is silly beyond words. First, as a point of fact, voting is not "thought," "opinion," or "speech" but an *act*. More significantly, however, thought and speech most certainly are the legitimate domain of religion. Has Waters — who, amazingly, writes for the "On faith" section of the *Post* — never heard the injunction that we are to hurt no one in "thought, word, or deed"? Has he never heard of "impure thoughts"? Would he find fantasies involving rape, torture, and murder palatable because they were merely thoughts? Would he chastise a cleric who preached against the harboring of bigoted opinions? In reality, since all evil starts with thought, that is precisely where religion starts its remedy. To use that old cliché, it's called nipping things in the bud.

Moreover, it almost seems as if Waters has trouble separating church and state in his own mind. After all, it appears he would apply the First Amendment to the church as well as to government. But government's business is legality (which should have a basis in morality, of course) and is thus quite limited, while religion's is morality and thus touches everything. As an example of this difference, consider that while there may be a legal right to any opinion, there is no moral right to an immoral opinion. And it is religion's role to prescribe and proscribe, to preach and teach. That's why it's chock full of do's and don'ts, of thou-shalt-nots. (Note: We should also wonder if Waters is so taken aback by hate-speech laws. You see, I've observed that while statisticians often bristle at religion's use of social and spiritual pressure to enforce dogma, they have no problem with enforcing dogma through the iron fist of government. Of course, the fact that little g enforces statist dogma could have something to do with this contradiction.)

Getting back to what the church actually teaches, Obama's position on abortion is not the only reason why Catholics (and others) should oppose him. Just consider the following quotations:

- "It is clear that the main tenet of socialism, community of goods, must be utterly rejected, since it only injures those whom it would seem meant to benefit, is directly contrary to the natural rights of mankind, and would introduce confusion and disorder into the commonweal." — [Pope Leo XIII](#), May 15, 1891
- "Socialism . . . cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth.... No one can be at the same time a sincere Catholic and true socialist." — Pope Pius XI, May 15, 1931
- "No Catholic [can] subscribe even to moderate Socialism." — Pope John XXIII, May 15, 1961

Those who have ears will hear. Those who have eyes will see.

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