



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on October 15, 2012

Biden Says He's a Good Catholic Who Supports Abortion

Vice President Joe Biden says that his Catholic religion defines who he is and that he supports legalized abortion.

That was the sum total of the Biden answer to a question about religion and abortion during the October 11 [vice presidential debate](#) between himself and GOP vice presidential candidate Rep. [Paul Ryan](#) (R-Wis.). Ryan is also a Catholic.

This year's election marks the first time both vice presidential candidates are Catholics, although the two men differ widely in their understanding of Catholic teaching.



What Biden Said

[Martha Raddatz](#), a leftist media luminary [who hosted](#) President Obama at her wedding in 1991 and [visits with](#) Biden, asked the debate question about religion and abortion.

"This debate is indeed historic," [Raddatz began](#). "We have two Catholic candidates, first time on a stage such as this, and I would like to ask you both to tell me what role your religion has played in your own personal views on abortion. Please talk about how you came to that decision. Talk about how your religion played a part in that."

[Ryan answered](#) first, saying that the Romney ticket is pro-life — but not for unborn babies conceived of rape and incest. Romney would also allow exceptions for the "health of the mother."

Then [Biden gave his answer](#). "My religion defines who I am," [he assured](#) Americans. "And I've been a practicing Catholic my whole life."

And it has particularly informed my social doctrine. Catholic social doctrine talks about taking care of those who — who can't take care of themselves, people who need help.

With regard to — with regard to abortion, I accept my church's position on abortion as a — what we call *de fide* [dogmatic teaching]. Life begins at conception. That's the church's judgment. I accept it in my personal life.

But I refuse to impose it on equally devout Christians and Muslims and Jews and — I just refuse to impose that on others, unlike my friend here, the congressman.

I — I do not believe that — that we have a right to tell other people that women, they — they can't control their body. It's a decision between them and their doctor, in my view. And the Supreme Court — I'm not going to interfere with that.

Biden has long made a point of telling Catholic voters that he is a devout and practicing Catholic, while also claiming that he cannot impose his personal beliefs on abortion on others.

That answer doesn't fly with [Catholic teaching](#). According to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' statement on "[Catholics in Political Life](#)":



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It is the teaching of the Catholic Church from the very beginning, founded on her understanding of her Lord's own witness to the sacredness of human life, that the killing of an unborn child is always intrinsically evil and can never be justified.

If those who perform an abortion and those who cooperate willingly in the action are fully aware of the objective evil of what they do, they are guilty of grave sin and thereby separate themselves from God's grace. This is the constant and received teaching of the Church. It is, as well, the conviction of many other people of good will.

To make such intrinsically evil actions legal is itself wrong. This is the point most recently highlighted in official Catholic teaching. The legal system as such can be said to cooperate in evil when it fails to protect the lives of those who have no protection except the law. In the United States of America, abortion on demand has been made a constitutional right by a decision of the Supreme Court. Failing to protect the lives of innocent and defenseless members of the human race is to sin against justice. Those who formulate law therefore have an obligation in conscience to work toward correcting morally defective laws, lest they be guilty of cooperating in evil and in sinning against the common good.

During the vice presidential debate, Biden also defended the Obama administration's contraception mandate that [forces Catholic employers](#) to provide free birth control to employees, regardless of the Catholic teaching that [contraception is a grave moral evil](#).

[Said Biden](#), "with regard to the assault on the Catholic Church, let me make it absolutely clear. No religious institution, Catholic or otherwise, including Catholic Social Services, Georgetown Hospital, Mercy — any hospital — none has to either refer contraception. None has to pay for contraception. None has to be a vehicle to get contraception in any insurance policy they provide. That is a fact. That is a fact."

No, it's not a fact. The Obama mandate requires that employees of such institutions have access to "free" contraceptive coverage, and the cost of the supposedly free contraceptives provided by healthcare insurers will necessarily be added to the cost of the overall coverage.

No Restrictions on Abortion Under Obama

After the debate, *The Weekly Standard's* [John McCormack](#) asked Obama officials what restrictions they might allow on abortion. McCormack asked the question in light of Ryan's asseveration that Obama is an extremist on abortion.

[Said Ryan](#), "And with respect to abortion, the Democratic Party used to say they want it to be safe, legal and rare."

Now they support it without restriction and with taxpayer funding, taxpayer funding in "ObamaCare," taxpayer funding with foreign aid. The vice president himself went to China and said that he sympathized or wouldn't second-guess their one-child policy of forced abortions and sterilizations. That, to me, is pretty extreme.

McCormack cornered Obama officials and [Cecille Richards](#), who as chief of Planned Parenthood runs the [largest abortion operation](#) in the United States.

"The Obama campaign denied the president favored abortion without restriction, but top Obama officials [Jim Messina](#), [Stephanie Cutter](#), and [David Axelrod](#) could not name a single restriction the president supports," [McCormack wrote](#).



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TWS: Mr. Messina, the issue of abortion came up tonight with both sides trying to paint the other as extremist. Can you say, are there any restrictions that the president supports at any stage of pregnancy on the issue of abortion?

MESSINA: Look, we have been absolute[ly] clear. I think as you saw an absolute difference between the president and Romney on this. Romney's position has been on four different sides. But I take him at his word that he says he will be happy to sign a bill outlawing all abortions in the United States of America. That's not our position that's not where the American public is. And I think it's going to be a very difficult position for them to defend in the battleground states. Swing women voters in places like Colorado in Virginia looked at that exchange tonight that you talked about and said we cannot support this guy.

TWS: So the president doesn't support any restrictions on abortion?

MESSINA: Look, we've been very clear. You know our position on abortion.

TWS: No. I asked, can you say what it is?

MESSINA: Look, don't put words in my mouth. I've been very clear about our position. And that's what it is.

TWS: Can you name one restriction?

Messina quit the conversation. Obama campaign officials David Axelrod and Stephanie Cutter couldn't answer the question either. "So I turned to Cecille Richards, the head of Planned Parenthood," [McCormack wrote](#).

"There already are restrictions on the books," she told me. But does the president support any of them? Richards said she didn't know. "I haven't spoken to him about those," she replied.

McCormack noted that Obama is radically pro abortion, and pointed to an exchange with a reporter in 2003. "I am pro-choice," then-state [Senator Obama said](#) at a press conference during his campaign for U.S. Senate.

Reporter: In all situations including the late term thing?

Obama: I am pro-choice. I believe that women make responsible choices and they know better than anybody the tragedy of a difficult pregnancy and I don't think that it's the government's role to meddle in that choice.

Indeed, as an Illinois state senator, Obama repeatedly opposed legislation to stop doctors from killing abortion survivors. [Obama even killed](#) such a bill in 2003 when he was a committee chairman.

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Photo of Joe Biden at vice presidential debate: AP Images



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