

Press Release – September 4, 2008

Palin Attacks Catholic Community Organizing by Senator Obama
Speech Lacked Any Mention of Economic Distress Across America



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Media Contacts:
media@catholicdemocrats.org
Ph: 617/817-8617

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Minneapolis, Minn. - [Catholic Democrats](http://www.catholicdemocrats.org) is expressing surprise and shock that Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin's acceptance speech tonight mocked her opponent's work in the 1980s for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. She belittled Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama's experience as a community organizer in Catholic parishes on the South Side of Chicago, work he undertook instead of pursuing a lucrative career on Wall Street. In her acceptance speech, Ms. Palin said, "I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities." Community organizing is at the heart of Catholic Social Teaching to end poverty and promote social justice.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has operated the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, its domestic anti-poverty and social justice program, since 1969. In 1986, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, which said, "Human dignity can be realized and protected only in community." Senator Obama worked in several Catholic parishes, supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, helping to address severe joblessness and housing needs in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods of Chicago.

"It is shocking that a vice presidential candidate would disparage an essential component of the Catholic Social Tradition with her condescending attack on urban community organizing," said Dr. Patrick Whelan, president of *Catholic Democrats*. "Her divisive rhetoric, repeatedly pitting small towns against urban communities, demonstrates not only a lack of charity toward the needs of some of the least among us but a fundamental disrespect for those who dedicate their lives to overcoming poverty across our country. Her sarcastic tone is also emblematic of the contempt that she and Senator McCain have shown toward actually addressing the economic distress that is gripping America in these difficult times. Economic issues, including extreme poverty, are among the most important to Catholics and other people of faith in this election."

"Why do Governor Palin and the McCain campaign sarcastically attack efforts to organize unemployed Catholics and Protestants? Senator Obama has spoken warmly about his experiences as a community organizer on the South Side of Chicago," said Lisa Schare, chair of *Catholic Democrats* of Ohio. "His work in helping people who were experiencing the real trauma of losing their jobs and livelihoods demonstrates an authentic Christian spirit and the real essence of Catholic Social Teaching, something strikingly absent from her remarks tonight."

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About Catholic Democrats

Catholic Democrats is an association of state based groups representing a Catholic voice within the Democratic Party, and advancing a public understanding of the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching and its potential to help solve the broad range of problems confronting all Americans. For more information about Catholic Democrats please go to www.catholicdemocrats.org