

Press Release – September 24, 2008

Catholic Democrats Decries Hypocrisy and Divisive Partisanship in Open Letter from Carl Anderson to Senator Joe Biden

Members of Knights of Columbus Speak out against Anderson for Political Attack



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Boston, Mass. - [Catholic Democrats](http://www.catholicdemocrats.org) is decrying the hypocritical and partisan attack by Carl Anderson, national head of the Knights of Columbus, on Senator Joseph Biden last Friday in a full-page advertisement circulated in major U.S. daily newspapers. Paying an undisclosed five-figure sum in funds from his non-profit organization, Mr. Anderson attacked Senator Biden's Catholicism and the integrity of his conscience. The [open letter](#) compared the Vice Presidential candidate's views on abortion to those of pre-Civil War advocates of slavery. Mr. Anderson, a former Reagan Administration official who worked very publicly through two presidential campaigns to elect George W. Bush, grossly mischaracterized Senator Biden as an advocate of abortion while carelessly ignoring the racial overtones of invoking slavery in attacking the running mate of history's first black presidential nominee.

Mr. Anderson's comments were motivated by Senator Biden's appearance September 7th on *Meet the Press*, in which Senator Biden reiterated the determination that he and Senator Obama share to implement constructive measures that would help reduce abortion in America. These are measures that were called for in the US Bishops' [Faithful Citizenship](#) document issued at the beginning of the presidential campaign last fall. Mr. Anderson's letter completely ignores the common ground with American Catholics that the Democratic candidates detailed in their Platform, language excluded from Senator John McCain's Platform, which would implement new approaches to significantly decrease the number of abortions.

"It is sacrilegious for Mr. Anderson, someone who holds himself up as a flag bearer for the values and virtue of our faith, to use his shared Catholic identity with Senator Biden as a foil to attack him for blatantly political purposes," said Dr. Patrick Whelan, president of the *Catholic Democrats*. "Not is this ad inconsistent with the political activity guidelines of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops for Catholic organizations, but the message is grossly hypocritical. Mr. Anderson's recent book, [A Civilization of Love](#), cites Pope John Paul II in calling for constructive measures to decrease abortions, the same message Senator Biden advocated in his interview."

Although Mr. Anderson is neither a theologian nor Senator Biden's spiritual advisor, his letter makes a personal attack on Senator Biden's Catholic faith by disputing the Senator's reading of Church history in the Middle Ages and passing judgment on his conscience. The letter also condescendingly states that Catholic women may be induced to seek more abortions as a result of Senator Biden's argument in favor of an abortion reduction strategy as opposed to Mr. Anderson's preferred strategy of criminalization. The letter ignores Senator Biden's strong commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, reflected in legislation he was instrumental in passing, including: The United States Commission on Civil

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Rights Act of 1983, The Global Climate Change Act in 1987, Stopping Genocide in Bosnia, Kosovo and Darfur in 1993 and 2004 respectively, and the Kids 2000 Act [in 2000] among many others during his 25 years of service as US Senator. Lastly, Mr. Anderson offers no evidence, such as polling data within the Knights of Columbus, that he speaks for anyone other than himself.

"As a member of the Knights of Columbus, I want to make it clear that Carl Anderson does not speak for me," said Thomas P. O'Neill III, former Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts. "For 125 years, the Knights have stood for solidarity and for aiding those in need. These statements, transparently promoting the McCain candidacy and by extension all the moral failures of the Bush years, do not reflect our Catholic tradition. Instead they risk making the Knights a tool of political partisanship at a time when the Knights can, and should, be focusing on the Church's greatest gift to our country, the rich tradition of Catholic Social teaching."

"As a Knight, I am proud to support Senator Biden, whose record reflects the best of Catholic Social Teaching," said Rev John Montag, S.J., a Catholic priest. "Like all Americans, Catholics are facing economic turmoil, concerns about health care, and worries regarding the environment and global warming. Catholics are concerned about keeping their homes, feeding their families, and affording their transportation needs. Senator Biden has reflected his Catholic values throughout his career in a way that Catholics understand, by helping those in need, working for peace, and advancing practical strategies to reduce the prevalence of abortion."

Mr. Anderson's public letter is made in the name of Catholicism but, in fact, was written for partisan political purposes. In doing so, he diminishes the Catholic tradition he seeks to represent by using his faith as a weapon to attack a fellow Catholic, rather than as a means to attain the kind of civilization of love about which he himself has written.

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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