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Kennedy Townsend/O'Neill/Roosevelt articulate Catholic Democratic message that Republicans have no monopoly on Catholic virtue

President's speech to Republican Catholic Prayer Breakfast recognized as an exploitation of the Catholic Church and the Pope's visit by Republicans

Boston, MA - The Catholic Democrats, a national advocacy association, have joined Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Thomas P O'Neill III and James Roosevelt, Jr. in admonishing the organizers of the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast for exploiting our shared Catholic faith to advance the agenda of the ideological right.

In the opinion piece published today on the Huffington Post, "[A Real Catholic Voice](#)," the authors urge Catholics to heed the message of Hope that the Pope is advancing during his trip to the United States, rather than buying into the Prayer Breakfast message that only Republicans can be 'good Catholics.'

[Organized by Republican operatives](#), many of whom comprise the Catholics for McCain Presidential Committee, Kennedy Townsend, O'Neill and Roosevelt rightly declared, "... the organizers bring Rovian style tactics to our faith, perpetuating the sharpening of religious differences on a narrow selection of social issues. In doing so, they contribute to painful and fruitless divisions around faith and politics, at a time when we face the most daunting set of issues in a generation. A gathering that should reflect the political and ideological diversity of Catholicism in public life and the best our faith has to offer instead seeks to perpetuate the myth that in order to be a good Catholic one must be a good Republican. Tragically, they serve neither the best interests of the Church or the country."

They proved correct. The Prayer Breakfast again served up a partisan event as if it were a national celebration of Catholic prayerfulness and accomplishment. [In his remarks](#) today, President Bush, who appeared at the event for the fourth year in a row, sought to reinterpret the Pope's message of hope and reconciliation as somehow compatible with Administration policies. He made no reference to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to the economic distress and loss of health insurance spreading across America, to the food riots

and threat of starvation around the world, or to the relative stagnation in the progress against abortion since he took office. Instead, Mr. Bush congratulated the Republicans present, stating, "Together, we've worked to foster a culture of tolerance and peace."

Calling on our faith, Kennedy, O'Neill, and Roosevelt go on to also say, "In this presidential campaign, we find voters rejecting the style of politics where adversaries are demonized and the price of victory by one vote is never too high. Catholicism and the Pope's message provide Catholics - from both sides of the aisle - an avenue to common ground from which to lead."

"The Catholic Democrats recognize in both the generations of public service by these three great American political families, and particularly the leadership of each of these authors, a tangible realization of the potential that Catholic Social Teaching has for helping us envision a better future for all Americans," said Steve Krueger, a spokesman for Catholic Democrats.

They conclude, "For Catholics, the papal visit should be a reminder of what unites us as Catholic Christians and what inspires our work for the common good and our care for the common life we share with all."

About Catholic Democrats

Catholic Democrats is an association of state based groups offering a Catholic voice within the Democratic Party, and standing up for Catholic office holders who are attacked because of their faith. The Catholic Democrats are advancing the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching in the public square for the common good. For more information about Catholic Democrats please go to www.catholicdemocrats.org.

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