
Open Letter to President Obama

Contributed by CAA Staff
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AN OPEN LETTER TO
PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA
ON BEHALF OF
CATHOLICS IN AMERICA

Dear Mr. President:

During your long campaign you spoke frequently about "bringing Americans together again." Your chief themes were "hope" and "change." These vague terms attracted voters—Catholics among them—who were dissatisfied with our country's direction.

In your speeches, you avoided talking about several key moral issues of concern to Catholics and to millions of other Americans. Now that you are president, you cannot avoid dealing with these issues directly, and how you deal with them will determine whether Catholics perceive you as "bringing Americans together again" or as undermining basic Christian moral teachings.

For example, one item likely to come before Congress is the Freedom of Choice Act, which concerns itself with abortion. The Catholic bishops of America have noted that FOCA "would have lethal consequences for prenatal human life" and "would have an equally destructive effect on the freedom of conscience of doctors, nurses, and health care workers whose personal convictions do not permit them to cooperate in the private killing of unborn children."

FOCA is just one of several issues through which your good relations with many Catholics might be ended.

The Five Non-Negotiable Issues

During each election cycle since 2004, Catholic Answers Action has distributed a Voter's Guide for Serious Catholics. This guide—which has been read by millions of Americans, both Catholic and non-Catholic—discusses five things that, under Catholic principles, must be opposed always and without exception. We have termed these the "five non-negotiables." They are: (1) abortion, (2) embryonic stem-cell research, (3) human cloning, (4) euthanasia, and (5) homosexual "marriage."

The first four all violate a fundamental moral principle: It is never permissible to take intentionally and directly an innocent human life. Abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, and human cloning involve the intentional and direct killing of innocent unborn human beings. Euthanasia involves a similar killing of those perceived as "unwanted" or those whose mental or moral capacities have been diminished by illness or pain.

The fifth "non-negotiable," while not involving killing, concerns something intrinsic to human nature. Marriage, as the union of one man and one woman, predates all religions and is not derived from them. It simply is what it is. Nothing else can become a marriage just by being titled a marriage.

Mr. President, on Election Day you achieved a clear victory, but you won no mandate. You are savvy enough to know that if you had had an opponent with a clearer message, or if President Bush had not had such low approval ratings, or if the country had not been at war, or if the Republican Party had offered a coherent philosophy, or if the economy had

tanked just a couple of months later—today you probably would be the junior senator from Illinois.

But that concerns political utility. Let me end this Open Letter with an appeal to you as a man.

Your Greatest Challenge

Some of the political positions you have endorsed (I refer here to your positions on the “five non-negotiables”) are unworthy of you, as they are unworthy of anyone who wishes to be considered humane. There is nothing humane in killing children, in killing the elderly or sick, or even in backing a distorted idea of what constitutes real marriage.

You now have achieved the highest office in the land. There is no greater honor that the American people can bestow on you. There is no greater honor that you can return to them than to conform your own conscience to the highest moral standards and to embrace truth and justice for their own sake—and for the sake of those who are victims of the “five non-negotiables.”

Respectfully yours,
Karl Keating
President, Catholic Answers Action