

Panel 4 - Discussion

All right, thank you. We're going to go now to a very brief session of questions or comments which you may have.

We had to start late because of the rain, so this will be a little bit truncated. But does anybody have a comment or question for this -- we're very honored by this panel and their informative, very informative and worthwhile presentations. All right. Are there any questions? Yes, Pablo Eisenberg.

VOICE: Yes, I'm Pablo Eisenberg from the Georgetown Public Policy Institute. This question probably is addressed mostly to John, but Bob may find it relevant.

What was one of the great features about Geno is that he could talk about -- not focusing on single issues within the church, because he was inside the church.

And the question is, how can one move both the Catholic Church and maybe other 95 denominations from a one-issue basis, if we don't have the Genos inside the church, or at the Jack Egans, or whoever -- so where do you see that message coming from, John? Both within the church and perhaps within other denominations?

MR. CARR: I may be of a different perspective that will be a surprise to people. When Stu said, you know, John Kerry was in danger of being denied communion all across the country -- there are almost 300 bishops. I believe two of them said that they would deny communion.

The story was the two. They acted conscientiously, and within their powers. But there would have been an interesting story on why the vast majority of bishops did not use that route, why Cardinal McCarrick in this city, who believed -- I think there is basically two kinds -- and I have to be careful of this, 'cause two of my colleagues from the Catholic press are here. Cardinal McCarrick has described it this way: there's two kinds of leadership. Both are legitimate, but we go one way or the other. 96 One is a conviction that our values, our principles, are basically right, whether it's on peace, or justice, or life, or poverty. And that the primary task of the church is to engage and persuade, and to draw people. And to try and assemble a large enough coalition with others who share our values, that we can persuade our elected representatives.

There is another tradition or option, which is the conviction that our values or principles are so besieged in this culture that the primary task is one of protection. And so you try and maintain purity. But in fact, it is hard to maintain what we believe. And there are faiths that have chosen this.

My own view, what the Catholic bishops -- I'll share this with you -- what they offered the Catholic community was a consistent ethic of life, that began with life at the outset, but talks about the death penalty, talks about war and peace, talks about the way in which human dignity is diminished.

The way I think this will be communicated -- and I hope successfully -- it is, in our tradition the starting point is human life and 97 dignity. And human life comes first. Without life nothing else is possible. But in our tradition, I think in the others, it's linked directly to dignity. Without life nothing's possible, but without dignity life is not truly human. So, faith and family, work and education, health care and housing.

55 million people without health care in this country is not just a political issue, or an economic problem. It's a moral issue.

One of the challenges, frankly, for the church is to find a way to communicate in the midst of challenge. Scandal -- the "New York Times" isn't interested in the 200 bishops who didn't take that path. And frankly -- last comment from me on this question -- Stu talked about when the lecture was Catholics should not be single-issue. I don't think most Catholics are single issue. I think I respect those who are. Somebody who believes strongly enough to say, "I'm just not gonna" -- abortion, the war, you name it.

But these days, we're not the only ones who are single-issue. Emily's list has two criteria: you have to be a woman and you have 98to be against any restrictions on abortion. It is very difficult to get money in the Democratic Party if you believe what I believe and run for office.

So I don't think the principal danger of becoming single-issue is in the Roman Catholic Church. I think there are other segments of society that have decided, "this is the be-all and end-all."

MR. HARRIS: Robert Edgar?

MR. EDGAR: Pablo, I think I'll let John's statement speak for itself because I think it's right. But a nuance of your question I think's important. And that is, that it's often most effective -- and Geno was a genius at this -- at speaking truth to power within your own tradition. And I think there is a seismic change taking place in the last nine months to a year, since the last presidential election. Let me give you just a couple examples.

in January of last year, it was a group of Evangelicals who gathered and wrote a letter to the president saying, "Mr. President, the media has said the moral issues 99of our time are abortion, civil marriage, and homosexuality. We think Jesus talked a lot more about issues of the poor." And that has a very powerful voice.

More recently, on the issue of climate change and global warming, the National Religious Partnership on Environment, which John's a part of, through its evangelical partner, a very conservative evangelical partner, sent one or two Evangelicals to Oxford to listen carefully to a conservative scientist making a case for climate change. And one of those players or participants was Rich Sizic (phonetic) who's very much part of the evangelical family. He is passionately evangelical in believing that the moral issue of our time is global warming. And so I think inside the church.

And on the left -- I tend to be on the left -- one of the things we're trying to do is remind those progressive liberals that they have to have ego disarmament. That in fact, individuals have egos, but institutions have egos, as well. And part of our problem is that the far religious right, for 40 years, has been organizing -- they have egos and institutions as well, but they've had a common message theme. They've branded their message, as opposed to branding their organizations. And I think on the left, we tend to want to see our own organization succeed. So we've said, "let's address fear, fundamentalism, and Fox television, with a commitment to peace, poverty, and planet Earth."