

**John L. Carr, Secretary, Department of Social Development and World Peace,  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**

Good morning. This is the first time I think I've ever heard Bob 30Edgar and the National Council of Churches identified as on the right, and John Carr and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on the left. I know it's just a matter of where we're seated.

(Laughter.)

I was very struck by Stuart's first sentence, "I loved Geno Baroni." One thing that struck me is the Geno never said words like that, in my experience. I knew he loved me, I loved him, but we never talked about that. But it says something about this man that two people who share the same values but frankly couldn't be more different: Northern; Southern, policy wonk; intuitive leader, lawyer; priest, Jewish; Catholic, came together around those values. And as much as you learned from Geno, I think he learned from you, and it just says something about that man.

I'm honored to be a part of this gathering. I thank the foundation and everyone who put it together. I'm a little daunted, being on this panel, and having seen who was here yesterday and will be here later, 31because I've told Bob before, I think I have the most pompous title of any of the people on any of the panels.

How would you like to be Secretary of Social Development and World Peace for the US Catholic Bishops conference, especially these days? I remember getting on an elevator at one of the bishops meetings, and I had a ridiculously large name card that said I worked for the bishops conference, my name, and my title. And I could see a couple was looking at me sort of strangely, and the guy said, "You're not a bishop."

And I don't know if it was the way that I was dressed or my wedding ring that gave me away --

(Laughter.)

I said, "No, I'm not a bishop. I work for the bishop. And I could see he was reading the rest of my name card, and he turned to his wife and he said, "He's in charge of social development and world peace."

And she seemed a little underwhelmed by this. She said, "You need to do a better job."  
32

(Laughter.)

I think what today is about is how do we do a better job, not just of remembering Geno, but living his legacy today.

I succeeded Brian Hehir, and you heard him yesterday, and I'm not going to give three points. I had a tidy little thing, and yesterday I had a flood of memories, and a sense of real gratitude for having had Geno as a friend and mentor, and regret, as Stu said, that he's not here. So I kind of threw away what I was going to do, and want to say what's on my mind and in my heart, and I will do what Geno did: whatever the topic, he just said what he wanted to say. So this is my shot.

I'm going to talk later about two institutions that Geno loved, and that disappointed him regularly. One is the Roman Catholic Church, and the other is the Democratic Party. And I think some of the things I may say could cost me my job, and so I ask the journalists in the room to be gentle with me. And some of the things I'm going to say about the Democratic Party could cost me some of my friends in this room. But here 33 goes.

The point I would make about them, one of Geno's rules was, "Seize a crisis. If necessary, create one." I think when it comes to the Roman Catholic Church and the Democratic Party, we don't have to make the crisis. We are facing some crises.

Geno was a complicated man. He was a man of strong convictions and powerful emotions. He was enthusiastic, but he was an often sad man. He was excited and angry, and frustrated a good part of the time. Was clear in his own mind, and confusing to others -- Joe did the circles and squares, and all that. And he was often very encouraged and very appalled.

And I think if Geno looked around today, he'd be both encouraged and appalled. He'd be encouraged by the new focus on the role of religion in public life. He would be encouraged as a priest at the wrestling with what it means to be a Catholic and American, in these difficult days. He would be one of those who would be pleased to read that voters, when asked why they chose who they chose, moral values was at the top of their 34 list. He'd want to have something to say about how we define moral values.

So he would be happy that there was a greater focus on faith in public life. That I think was who he was.

He would be appalled at how shrill and how shallow that discussion usually is, how often it's more about winning an election than living our faith or applying our principles. It's often manipulated for partisan purpose, and diminished for electoral purposes. It's often soundbites.

Geno would find the religious right more right than religious. He would wonder, where are the least of these in their agenda? But at the same time he would be confused and frankly deeply disappointed by progressives who care a lot about the (unintelligible) and endangered species, but not the lives of unborn children; that in this city of Washington more than half of the young women destroy, for a variety of reasons we can discuss, their unborn child rather than give birth to them. He would consider that a statement of failure, not a political issue. 35 George Bush was very skillful, and I think sincere, in talking about the "culture of life." But it's more than signing a partial-birth abortion ban. It involves issues of war and peace, health care and housing, hunger. Part of the shrillness and the shallowness in the campaign, my favorite moment or worst moment, was when they adjusted the timing of the G-8 summit so the president could have his picture taken with John Paul II.

And I remember, the picture was in the "Washington Post" and the "New York Times." It wasn't the picture that Karl Rove had in mind. It was a picture of the pope shaking his finger at the president as he talked about Iraq and the Middle East.

John Kerry had some bad moments as well. As he was trying to defend his own faith, he told the New York Times that he was a faithful Catholic in the tradition of Pius XXIII.

And for the non-Catholics in the room, there was a Pius XII, and there was a John XXIII. There was no Pius XXIII.

(Laughter.) 36 His message for what it was, was "I used to be an altar boy, and my faith is private and has no role in my public choices." Candidly, that is not the faith that Geno advocated, and that is not the politics that Geno advocated. We believe our faith ought to in fact inform our choices. That's part of why we celebrate Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr., today.

The Republican Party had a systematic outreach to Catholic voters -- not Catholic leaders, Catholic voters. The Democratic Party had a religious outreach coordinator, and I don't know them, and all we know about them is the first one was a member of Act Up, who was known for its abuse of the Eucharist in a demonstration at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

And the second one was one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, a minister that wanted to take "under God" out of the Pledge of Allegiance. I don't judge them, but I question the judgment of those as the people you might choose for religious outreach.

Geno would be encouraged about the new emphasis on faith-based organizations. That's 37who he was, but he didn't limit his concern to faith-based. He obviously was focused on neighborhood and community organizations. He invested his life in trying to increase the capacity and the skill and the power, organizations, faith-based or not.

I don't want to get into the discussion of what's better. I think Geno would say we ought to turn to faith-based institutions as well as others because on the hardest issues, and in the toughest communities, frankly that's all that's left are little churches and Catholic schools. With all due respect, there are no chapters of People for the American Way in Anacostia. It's no accident that before the politicians turned to the faith-based community and I would remind you that we were faith-based before faith-based was cool. And it didn't take the president to tell us that we had an obligation to the poor. Jesus had already done that quite powerfully.

But it's worth remembering, the community organization turned to faith-based institutions, the IAF, PECO, Gamalao (phonetic). They used to organize 38neighborhood groups, now organize churches, because that's all that's there.

Well, one more thing. He would be encouraged, and it's worth remembering that Gore had a faith-based program, and so did Kerry. And Geno would have had his hands on all of them. One of my favorite memories is Stu talked about how Geno was helpful in the '76 campaign. And somebody reported, might have been the "National Catholic Reporter," that there was a note on the switchboard of the "Ford for president" campaign, that said "if a Father Baroni calls, put his call through." He was working with one campaign, and he was trying to influence the other campaign.

He would be appalled that this faith-based initiative, which he would support in principle, has frankly been more rhetoric than reality, more about politics than poverty. I think it is been very well-led. He would have loved John DiJulio, and Jim Touhy. But he would have said that it was poorly supported, in terms of more rhetoric than resources.

What it has become, sadly, is not an opportunity to think more creatively and work together to overcome the poverty which haunts our toughest communities, but a chance to re-fight old battles about church and state. It should be -- should have brought new urgency, new resources, and new creativity. And frankly it's just, to a sad extent, led to the "same old, same old" fights.

He would be encouraged by the grassroots efforts that have made a difference. Stu talked about the debt campaign. Think about the landmines campaign, think about the increase of development. President Carter worked at this. President Clinton gave a lot of speeches on this. We are the first increase in development assistance and foreign aid we've ever had. The Millennium Challenge account is something the churches and others worked hard to achieve. We would be amazed at the outpouring of concern and charity and generosity with Katrina.

So he'd be encouraged by the ways in which grassroots efforts by churches and others have made a difference on key international issues. He'd be encouraged by the outpouring of concern and money, and volunteers. He would be appalled that there is no similar energy or urgency on neighborhood, community, or poverty issues at home, where there are silent tsunamis, where there is a slow-motion hurricane, where there are waves of despair and deprivation, and floods of poverty.

He would be appalled by much of political life. By polls and focus groups that dominate -- not moral principles and convictions. He'd be concerned that so much of political life is shaped by the contributions of the strong, rather than the voices and the needs of the weak. He'd be appalled by how the demands of narrow special interests and powerful interests prevail, rather than any real search for the common good. He'd be appalled by the level of partisanship and ideological combat in this city. By the war rooms and attack ads, and the endless campaigns, rather than problem-solving and reaching across lines.

I think he would be appalled by the way in which individualism, rampant individualism, has sort of become the dominant theme of both our political parties -- and there are great exceptions to these.

Some Republicans celebrate an individualism of the marketplace: the unfettered free working of the markets is the solution to all our problems. Sadly, people who came to office as compassionate conservatives, I think that we found that when push comes to shove, the conservatism trumps the compassion -- except in international affairs. They worship at the altar of the market.

On the other side, elements of the left and the Democratic Party I think kind of celebrate a lifestyle individualism that makes choice the ultimate criteria in public life.

Both I think represent different kinds of libertarianism, where the market is the ultimate criteria, or individual choice. No emphasis on the common good, or building the bridges that Geno was about.

I think he'd be encouraged by the recognition of Catholics as important swing voters as a constituency to be addressed. And he'd be concerned that one party, as I suggested -- he would be encouraged that one party -- in this case, the Republican Party -- is reaching out into systematic ways, sustained ways. People in this room including myself would

differ on some of the substance, but he'd be appalled that the other party seems indifferent on those issues, and in some ways may be pushing those people away.

I remember being told in a board meeting on Center for Community Change. One of the Kerry strategists, who shall remain nameless, that the strategy was to go after singles, seculars, and gays.

And my reaction was, that's a great way to carry Berkeley and midtown Manhattan. It's not a way to win Ohio. And I think people who are not single, secular, or gay, understood that that was part of the appeal, and that they weren't particularly at home in that kind of political movement.

He'd be encouraged by a lot of the discussion and wrestling within the Catholic Church. He'd be appalled by the reduction of all of life to one concern. As Stu said, he never compromised. He felt, as a progressive, 43as an advocate, an adviser to the Democratic Party, that the Democratic party should begin with care for the least, and the unborn child is the least in our midst. And I know we differ on those things, but one of the things he would have insisted on is respect for differing views, on that question.

He would be concerned about efforts by some in the Catholic community to restrict our vision to essential but incomplete agenda, nonnegotiables, issues of life and family, and insist that overcoming poverty, caring for the least of these, pursuing peace, those are nonnegotiable as well. We can debate, and we ought to debate how in fact to deal with those, and how we can work together.

He'd be concerned, as I am very concerned, that it's very hard for our church to be heard - - and I'll talk about why in a minute, on matters other than sexuality and clerical sexual abuse, even though a lot of the things we've talked about -- I'm gonna have to leave this meeting to go up to the Hill to be part of a press conference, to represent the bishops conference at a press 44conference with Barney Frank, where we are opposing the frankly mean-spirited measure that says if you engage in voter registration, within a year of the election you cannot receive housing funds, as if voter registration were a pernicious act.

And in fact, with all the rhetoric about faith-based initiatives, that would mean the archdiocese of New Orleans, which has built 4000 units of housing, would be precluded from taking those resources, because they also believe that registering voters and participation in public life is a religious duty.

He would think it's quite okay that many Catholics feel homeless, politically homeless, in this environment. That neither party at this point is an easy resting place for Catholics. But he would be very concerned that the constituency we cared most about, white urban ethnic voters, whatever you call them, have sort of been ignored to a certain extent. And they are very concerned about their jobs. One guy said to me, the auto worker who thought his job was gonna be 45outsourced, now is seeing his children's job with their computer skills being outsourced. Very concerned about what's happening in the neighborhoods, very concerned about privilege, to quote our distinguished senator. But also very concerned about the culture, and the way in which their children are being pushed.

I think many of us, particularly those of us who are raising teenagers, feel like we're in a battle for our kids hearts, minds, and souls, and sometimes we're not winning. It occurred to me the other day, the only people who don't have sex on network television are married people.

(Laughter.)

He would be encouraged that Catholic social teaching, which he built his life around, is much more visible in many ways. And he would give credit, great credit to John Paul II for that. And he would be pleased with some of the things that are going on in parishes and schools and universities, to share that tradition.

He would be appalled that we haven't moved farther. That lots of Catholics don't 46 know they own this tradition. Frankly, I find in many respects more interest in Catholic social teaching outside the Catholic community than inside. Evangelicals, Jewish leaders, mainline Protestant leaders.

He would see what happened with Katrina as a classic example of how those principles were violated. Respect for human life and dignity, you know, we saw it. People begging for water, people died with a blanket thrown over them. He would consider it a massive failure of the option for the poor and vulnerable. They were left behind. And he would see it as a complete collapse of the principal of subsidiarity, where what the family can't -

Usually subsidiarity, when people talk about it, says don't let large institutions overwhelm small institutions.

Well, it works the other way as well. When the family can't do what is necessary, you turn to the community and the neighborhood, or the city. And when the city is overwhelmed, you turn to state and other institutions. And when the whole state or a 47 region is overwhelmed, you turn to the national government. And the failure to respond could be seen as a failure of subsidiarity, and frankly as a failure of solidarity, to not recognize that those people were brothers and sisters.

He would think that it's just tragic that the opportunity to have a real debate, as Bob suggested, and as Stu suggested, about poverty seems to have come and gone, but we're stuck with the "same old same old." As Stu said, everybody's trotting up their own prepackaged ideological agendas. Geno was the guy who didn't believe in programs. You know, he didn't do one-two-three-four. He did circles, and squares, and connections. And I think if he were around he'd talk about overcoming poverty, in some ways as a table.

And he'd say the table needs four legs. One leg is what families and individuals ought to do, themselves. Sacrifice for their children for a good education.

The second leg of the table would be what he devoted his life to: community institutions, churches, neighborhood groups. 48 Long before the politicians discovered civil society, Geno was building it.

The third leg of the table, and often neglected, would be what the market needs to do. Geno was not antagonistic to the market. He thought, you know, but there were some things the market couldn't take care of. Bob mentioned global warming and 45 million people without health care. But that the market does have an obligation to produce decent

jobs at decent wages, so that people can support a family by their own creativity and work.

And then there would be the fourth leg of the table, the essential leg, when the others fail and when human rights are at stake, and that is what government needs to do, at every level.

Geno I think would say -- or I put words in his mouth -- the problem with Washington today is that everybody is in love with one leg of the table. Some are focused on individual responsibility, some are focused on faith-based and community organizations, some think the market will solve all the problems, and there are even a few left who think that there's a government response to every problem. In fact, Geno was a man who built bridges, and he would insist we see how those institutions together can work.

I'll wrap up by suggesting, the two institutions he cared about are in big trouble. The clerical sexual abuse scandal, he would be devastated how that has overwhelmed and raised issues of trust and credibility. And he would say all the things that are being done, new structures, new policies, are important. But the only way forward is to get back to mission, that we got to be more than our mistakes. I would say that mission on his holy card of bringing good news to the poor and liberty to captives, and new sight to the blind, is the only way forward for our church.

And he would say the Democratic Party, which he loved and criticized dramatically, needs to find a way not only to talk anew about culture and morality, but to think anew, and to act anew. Sprinkling biblical passages into the same old speeches isn't going to do it. Candidly, when some Democrats talk about extremists and people out of the mainstream who shouldn't serve on the court, I don't think they're talking about people who don't respect the right to organize.

When John McCain was being promoted for Vice President, it was widely said the only thing he had to shift is not to mess with Roe v. Wade. The definition of extremist for some, and I'm afraid the dominant voice in this party, is if you're at all uncomfortable with Roe v. Wade, and want to restrict abortion on demand in any way, shape, or form. People get that message, they feel they're not welcome. The Democratic Party, I'm afraid, aside from that issue, is in danger of losing its voice if not its values. That at least as it comes across -- and I'm a reluctant to judge by the newspapers, 'cause I don't like what they say about the Catholic Church a lot of the time -- but it seems like they're much more passionate about funds for PBS and NPR than they are funds for homeless people and people without housing.

Their strategy frankly right now seems to be Nancy Reagan's strategy, which is "Just say no," except on the war, which is, "Let's keep out of the line of fire."

If, in wrapping up, Geno would say, "These are days to be political without being partisan. Not to be cheerleader for any candidate, chaplain for any party, or advocate for any administration. But to challenge them all, on how it touches families and neighborhoods and poor people." He'd say, "We should be principled but not ideological. We don't compromise on our basics but we work with everybody we can to try and advance the ball."

And he would say, "We should build bridges, not drive wedges." The legacy Geno left us is not an institution. It is a set of ideas which we're talking about: a set of institutions which we need to build, and a group of individuals, many of them in this room, who are in Congress, work for the church, in private life, in academic life. We're his legacy.

The story I remember about Geno was late at night, when I first came to Washington, the phone would ring at about one o'clock in the morning, and my wife would say, "It's him."

And you'd pick up the phone, and you wouldn't hear a voice, you'd hear the crunch of an apple, and you'd say, "Geno, what do you want?"

And he would say, "Have you read the morning Post?"

And I'd say, "Geno, it doesn't come here until six o'clock in the morning."

And he'd read something, and then he'd say, "what are we gonna do about that?" And what he really meant is what are you gonna do about that?

I think in light of these two days, the question for us is, what are we gonna do about that?  
Thank you.