

How the Vatican and the Catholic Bishops Backed Obama's Socialist Health Care Scheme

By Cliff Kincaid

In a story about why the U.S. Catholic Bishops have embraced Democratic-style universal health care, the Los Angeles Times noted that the Roman Catholic Church considers healthcare a basic human right, "a position the church has articulated since 1963, when it was included in a papal encyclical by Pope John XXIII." Indeed, healthcare is declared a right in the "Peace on Earth" encyclical. It is also the basis of Obamacare.

The group Catholic Democrats has hailed passage of H.R. 3962, the Affordable Health Care for America Act of 2009, and notes that the only House Republican voting for it, Representative Joseph Cao of Louisiana, is a Catholic and former Jesuit seminarian. "The Catholic Church has been at the forefront of advocating for health care as a right for decades, including pastoral letters issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 1981 and 1993," the group notes.

The evidence indicates that the Bishops – and the Vatican itself -- are calling the shots behind the scene. In fact, as many media organizations are now reporting, they engineered the "compromise" that deleted abortion funding so the bill could pass the House. The Los Angeles Times reported that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Catholic, not only "conferred with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to be sure the new restrictions were acceptable" but "consulted by telephone with a cardinal in Rome."

CNN reported that, as a deal was being made between Pelosi and Catholic lobbyists, "Several Democrats, including Rep. Jason Altmire, D-Pennsylvania, said they are in touch with their Catholic Bishops back home. Altmire said he must have the approval of his bishop in Pittsburgh before he can vote yes."

Where is the media outrage over “the separation of church and state?” In this case, there is direct evidence of a foreign entity, the Vatican, actually passing judgment on legislation and, in effect, delivering votes for it.

Few in the media, on the left or right, want to raise the issue, apparently fearful of being labeled “anti-Catholic.”

But the outcome of the legislation in the House demonstrates that while the Republicans don't have the votes to stop it, the Vatican has the votes to pass it. Could the same thing happen in the U.S. Senate?

It is time for the major media to investigate how the officials of a major religious denomination, with its headquarters in Rome, are affecting the outcome of major pieces of legislation in the Congress of the United States.

On Saturday, November 7, after Catholic lobbyists had finalized a deal with House Speaker Pelosi, the Politico reported that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops had "delivered a critical endorsement" to Pelosi "by signing off on late-night agreement to grant a vote on an amendment barring insurance companies that participate in the exchange from covering abortions." The anti-abortion amendment by Rep. Bart Stupak, a Catholic Democrat, passed. Hence, the Bishops are now officially in favor of a bureaucratic plan that could spell the end to freedom of choice in health care and financially bankrupt the U.S.

"A half dozen lobbyists for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops joined negotiators in Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office to come to terms," reported the Christian Science Monitor.

The Hill newspaper reported that Energy and Commerce Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) had been trying to broker a deal and appealed to the Catholic Bishops. "I would like the [U.S. Conference of Catholic] Bishops, who as I understand it want a bill, to help us work out a plan where we don't have winners and losers," Waxman was quoted as saying. "Because the losers will make us lose the bill and the winners won't have won anything."

NBC's Doug Adams reported that the Catholic Bishops were "lobbying hard."

The shocking turn of events once again demonstrates the extreme left-wing drift of the Catholic Church, which is the nation's largest religious denomination with 67 million members and run by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. But their role in passing Pelosicare is not the only evidence of such a turn. The Bishops poured more than \$7.3 million of parishioners' money into the corrupt left-wing organization ACORN over the last decade before publicity over the organization's scandals forced suspension of the funding.

This is a matter of great importance because government-guaranteed “rights,” in the Vatican’s view, don’t stop with health care. Man, the papal “Peace on Earth” document said, “has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for the proper development of life, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest, and, finally, the necessary social services. In consequence, he has the right to be looked after in the event of ill health; disability stemming from his work; widowhood; old age; enforced unemployment; or whenever through no fault of his own he is deprived of the means of livelihood.”

As defined by the Catholic Bishops, this is a blueprint for a socialist state.

The encyclical said that individuals have the right to private ownership of property but that this right “entails a social obligation as well.”

Blogger Steven Waldman of Beliefnet.com made the critical point that while most pro-life groups were either opposed to Democratic-style universal health care plans or neutral, “The Catholic Bishops are the only major pro-life group that *wants* health care reform.”

But why? In addition to a socialist philosophy about the role of government, the Catholic Church operates 600 Catholic Hospitals, many of which serve legal and illegal immigrants. A national health care plan is a means by which these costs could be dumped on taxpayers.

Another factor could be the influence of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which recently announced a major agreement with the Catholic Bishops to make it easier for workers in Catholic hospitals to join unions. These hospitals have 525,193 full-time employees and 233,934 part-time workers who would normally be entitled to employer-paid health insurance. But under Pelosicare they could be transferred to a government plan offered under a so-called “health insurance exchange.” Once again, taxpayers would be stuck with the bill.

“Health reform will bring the U.S. closer to a true, coordinated health care system. We need and deserve a solid health care infrastructure that serves everyone and promotes the common good,” says the Catholic Health Association.

In addition to supporting “provisions in the legislation that will make health care more affordable for low-income people and the uninsured,” a November 7 Bishops’ letter to Congress cautioned against watering down provisions in the bill covering immigrants. It said, “We remain deeply concerned that immigrants be treated fairly and not lose the health care coverage that [they] have now.” The Bishops are so radical on health care reform that in a November 6 letter to

Congress they endorsed government health care for illegal aliens. The letter said they "support access for immigrants to the health-insurance exchange, *regardless of legal status*, and support removal of the five-year ban on legal immigrants accessing Medicaid and other federal health-care programs..." (emphasis added).

Vatican Paper Praises Marxism

In this context, in a major story largely ignored by the major U.S. media, a London newspaper recently noted that *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, published an October 21 article by Georg Sans that praised the Marxist theory of alienation under capitalism. The article, published in Italian, said that the church "must be grateful" to Marx for explaining the concept of "alienated labor" and "surplus value." Sans also said that "a large part of humanity" remains alienated.

The article was reprinted by an Italian communist web site, complete with an image of Karl Marx flashing a "V" for victory sign.

So-called "surplus value," which is said to amount to exploitation of workers under capitalism, is one of the major concepts of Marxism. It justifies the hatred of and violence against private property owners – the capitalists. "The doctrine of surplus value is the corner-stone of Marx's economic theory," stated V. I. Lenin.

Surplus value may sound esoteric but the concept is absolutely necessary in understanding the appeal of Marxism and the basis for revolutionary activity. The notion of surplus value is supposed to reflect the amount of output that exceeds the cost of the workers to produce a commodity. By definition under Marxism, this "surplus value," the source of what is commonly called profit, constitutes exploitation of the workers. It is the basis for government control of the economy and elimination of the property owners once the workers supposedly take charge.

The Vatican newspaper article is not a complete embrace of all aspects of Marxism. Sans, who teaches the History of Contemporary Philosophy at the Università Gregoriana, the first Jesuit University, is also critical of Marx's materialism and how Marxism has been applied in practice by Communist Parties. He calls this "ideological abuse" and says that an understanding of mankind has to take into account man's spiritual nature. Sans says that, "The history of Marxism has taught us, however, that all attempts to introduce communism by force ended up in an injustice and an even greater misery."

On the other hand, the article still puts the Vatican newspaper on the side of the Marxist philosophy of state control in the name of liberating the workers. "We must be grateful to the philosopher for the idea that man should be considered in light of the mode of production and form of economic management which predominate in society," he writes.

However, as Thomas Sowell points out in his book, *Marxism*, the Marxist analysis ignores the value produced by the capitalists who exercised private property rights in creating the means of production and employing the workers in the first place. Hence, the Marxist concept of surplus value, Sowell argues, is “Plainly arbitrary and unsupported.” It is essential to Marxist theory because the abolition of private property is a major plank in the communist platform.

The Sans article doesn’t just embrace the Marxist theory of alienation from the economy. On the matter of the natural environment, Sans expands this dubious theory to include another “aspect of alienation” which he said involves “man against nature.” Sans condemned the “overexploitation of natural resources and environmental destruction” that are said to characterize industrial societies.

Sounding like Al Gore, he explained, “No need to be materialistic to recognize that we must establish a degree of harmony between man and his natural environment. It is not simply to relate to a living space or obtaining food, but take account of the man who shall be a unity of body and spirit.” He goes on to condemn the “overexploitation of natural resources and environmental destruction” that are said to result from such alienation.



As noted by the London Times, “Professor Sans’s article was first published in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, a Jesuit paper, which is vetted in advance by the Vatican Secretariat of State. The decision to republish it in the Vatican newspaper gives it added papal endorsement.”

Kevin Clarke wrote a blog posting on the site of America magazine, the national Catholic Jesuit weekly, which declared, somewhat jokingly, “We’re all Marxists now!”

Jokes aside, the Vatican newspaper article is embarrassing to many Catholics, for the obvious reason that it exposes Marxist sympathies deep within the Vatican at a time when many Americans, including Catholics, are resisting the Marxist drive for total government control in the U.S. Embarrassment explains why so many conservative Catholic commentators have decided to ignore this Vatican embrace of the key component of revolutionary Marxism.

To make matters worse, the astute “Reading the Maps” blog pointed out that, “The explanation for the appearance of Sans’ article may lie in an extraordinary but littlenoticed Encyclical which the Pope issued in 2007 called *Spe Salvi*, or *In Hope We Were Saved*. *Spe Salvi* includes a long and surprisingly sophisticated assessment not only of the thought of Marx, but of the whole history of Western thought since the

Enlightenment.” The headline over the blog carried the headline, “Is the Pope a Marxist?”

This papal Encyclical explained that the “dreadful living conditions” described by Friedrich Engels, the co-author of the communist manifesto, gave rise to the Marxist view that “the time had come for a new, proletarian revolution,” in which “progress could not simply continue in small, linear steps” and that “A revolutionary leap was needed.”

The encyclical explained that, “Karl Marx took up the rallying call, and applied his incisive language and intellect to the task of launching this major new and, as he thought, definitive step in history towards salvation—towards what Kant had described as the ‘Kingdom of God.’”

It went on, “With great precision, albeit with a certain one-sided bias, Marx described the situation of his time, and with great analytical skill he spelled out the paths leading to revolution—and not only theoretically: by means of the Communist Party that came into being from the Communist Manifesto of 1848, he set it in motion. His promise, owing to the acuteness of his analysis and his clear indication of the means for radical change, was and still remains an endless source of fascination. Real revolution followed, in the most radical way in Russia.”

However, the pope also said that Marx's “fundamental” error was that “he did not say how matters should proceed thereafter” and that, “He simply presumed that with the expropriation of the ruling class, with the fall of political power and the socialization of means of production, the new Jerusalem would be realized.” The pope noted that Marxism did not lead to a “perfect world” but left behind “a trail of appalling destruction,” which is a major understatement. Professor Paul Kengor notes that the seminal Harvard University Press work, *The Black Book of Communism*, was probably conservative when estimating *only* 100 million deaths at the hands of communist governments.

On another level, the pope argued that the “error” of Marx was his materialistic philosophy, which ignores man's freedom and assumed that “once the economy had been put right, everything would automatically be put right.” However, on economic matters, as we have seen in the health care debate, the U.S. Catholic Bishops have embraced Democratic-style universal health care, declaring on the basis of a papal encyclical that health care is a right that should be guaranteed by government.

On the global level, Pope Benedict spoke forcefully in his own “Charity in Truth” encyclical, declaring that we need “a worldwide redistribution of energy resources,” more foreign aid from rich to poor nations, and a “world political authority” with “teeth” working through the United Nations to bring this about. The “teeth” could include the global bank tax that was discussed at the recent meeting of G-20 finance ministers and central bankers.

Marxist Infiltration of the Church

Conservative Catholics are very aware of the problem within their church and are organizing against it. For example, conservative Catholics in Battle Creek, Michigan, have been exposing a group called JONAH, standing for Joint Religious Organizing Network for Action and Hope. An affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation, a Saul Alinsky-type organization, it works to increase government involvement in the economy to benefit selected minority groups. Like ACORN, the Gamaliel Foundation has been funded by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. Unlike ACORN, CCHD money continues to flow to Gamaliel. Most of CCHD's funds come from the once-a-year CCHD collection, scheduled in most dioceses for the Sunday before Thanksgiving. Gamaliel has an item on its website that says, "Barack H. Obama, former Gamaliel organizer, is the 44th president of the United States." It also has a story about Obama friend and White House adviser Valerie Jarrett speaking to a Gamaliel event in Washington, D.C. of 2500 activists. Jarrett is the official who said that "we" had recruited communist Van Jones to the White House. Another speaker was Melody Barnes, Obama's Director of the Domestic Policy Council.

Before coming to the White House, Barnes was the executive vice president for Policy at the Center for American Progress (CAP), the George Soros-funded organization. Van Jones also worked at CAP before going to the White House. CAP CEO and President John Podesta, who served as President Clinton's chief of staff, is a major "progressive Catholic" and member of the ACORN advisory council who served as a professor at Georgetown University, a major Catholic institution. He is a graduate of Georgetown University Law Center.

On October 6, Podesta accepted the "Drinan Award," named for Catholic Priest Robert F. Drinan. Georgetown said that Drinan, a professor at Georgetown Law from 1981 until his death in 2007, was a "leading voice in the human rights movement for more than half a century" and "was affiliated with numerous organizations devoted to the furtherance of human rights." In fact, Drinan was a far-left radical who opposed U.S. efforts to prevent a communist takeover of Vietnam. A Democrat who served in Congress, before he was forced by the Vatican to step down, he opposed the impeachment of President Clinton and served on the national advisory council of the ACLU. He presided over a Mass honoring Speaker-Elect Nancy Pelosi on January 3, 2007.

Obama "worked in several Catholic parishes, supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, helping to address severe joblessness and housing needs in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods of Chicago," noted the group calling itself Catholic Democrats. The president of Catholic Democrats, Patrick Whelan, serves on the board of Catholics for Obama and as co-director of Pax Christi in Massachusetts.

In the newsletter of Pax Christi Massachusetts, Whelan writes about flying to Chicago in May of this year, "where I attended a reunion of Catholic Priests and community activists who hired a young Barack Obama in 1985." Whelan says that Obama, in his

book, *Dreams from My Father*, "created a character named Marty Kaufmann, based on two real-life community organizers who attended this gathering on May 16, 2009." Whelan also writes about Obama's meeting with the Pope. "Overall," he says, "it was clear that the common ground between the US Government and the Holy See-on poverty, the environment, international armed conflict and peace in the Middle East-far outweighed their differences."

Deputy National Security Adviser Denis McDonough has boasted that Obama's work as an organizer on the South Side of Chicago "was funded partly" by the "Catholic Church campaign for human development" – a reference to the Catholic Campaign for Human Development. McDonough, a former Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, was the moderator of a May 10, 2006, CAP event on "How Catholic Progressives View the Role of Faith in Governance."

The "Faith and Public Life Resource Center" of the Center for American Progress was provided \$150,000 by the Open Society Institute of George Soros, an admitted atheist. In the same year the Open Society Institute gave \$265,000 to the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. Its mission is to "enhance and expand delivery of legal services to indigent and low-income immigrants principally through diocesan immigration programs and to meet the immigration needs identified by the Catholic Church in the United States." But the Open Society Institute describes its purpose as "to support the Legalization Preparation Project," a precursor for amnesty.

The Open Society Institute provided \$100,000 in 2009 to the group known as Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good. The grant is described as being to support a "national organization that educates Catholics and the broader public about the Catholic social justice vision of the common good and connects that vision to specific advocacy efforts."

After the passage of H.R. 3962, the Pelosi health care bill, the group issued a release saying:

"Catholics in Alliance joins the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Health Association, and dozens of other Catholic and faith-based groups in celebrating this historic vote. We look forward to a final vote on a similar bill in the Senate, expected in the coming weeks."

The group's speaker's bureau includes such figures as:

- Chuck Collins of the far-left Institute for Policy Studies.
- Father Charles L. Currie, Society of Jesuits, President of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.
- Marie Dennis, Director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.
- Father Fred L. Thelen of Pax Christi.

Not surprisingly, Fred Rotondaro, the chairman of the group, is a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress.