



Faith and Power: U.S. Catholicism and Partisan Politics

WASHINGTON D.C. – Recent elections have been full of postulations by the pundits on which candidate or party will receive the Catholic vote. However, frustratingly for the analysts, Catholic political identity and engagement frequently defy categorization. With many Catholics practicing a kind of “cafeteria Catholicism” by picking and choosing which theological teachings they will champion, much of the group ends up splitting into either “social justice” or “prolife” groups. Even those Catholics who try to adhere to *all* of the Church’s teachings experience a sort of political homelessness because neither party aligns perfectly with Vatican dictates.

And yet, in 2003 under the leadership of then-prefect Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI), the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued a "Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life." The note explicitly asserts, "The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility toward the common good."

How does this decree for universality in political and moral practice integrate with the political and moral pluralism of Catholics in the U.S.? *Catholics and Politics: The Dynamic Tension between Faith and Power* takes up this very interplay that can confound predictable voting patterns and leave the church poised to critique narrowly partisan agendas across the spectrum. Examining Catholicism’s “mainstream” arrival in the U.S. over the last forty years, the book is divided into four parts—Catholics Leaders in U.S. Politics; The Catholic Public; Catholics and the Federal Government; and International Policy and the Vatican. Contributors from the fields of political science, religious studies, and Christian ethics reveal complex intersections of Catholicism and politics and the new opportunities for influence and risks of cooptation of political power produced by these shifts.

Kristin E. Heyer is an associate professor of Christian ethics in the Department of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University.

Mark J. Rozell is professor of public policy at George Mason University.

Michael A. Genovese holds the Loyola Chair of Leadership at Loyola Marymount University.

PUBLICATION DATE: November 2008, 248 pages

ISBN 978-1-58901-215-8, paperback \$29.95/£17.75

ISBN 978-1-58901-216-5, library binding \$33.95/£26.50

CONTACT: Jacqueline Beilhart, Publicist, (202) 687-9298, jb594@georgetown.edu

###