

## Summary of Findings:

- ☒ The Catholic vote is the most important swing constituency in politics today. One third of Ronald Reagan's huge non-Republican vote was Catholic. Catholics are concentrated in states which are decisive in Presidential elections: the Industrial Midwest, California and Florida, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut (a plurality of Catholic voters is found in the Industrial Midwest — as is the plurality of born-again or evangelical non-Catholic Christians). Nine of the ten states in which Bob Dole came closest to beating Bill Clinton — states in which Clinton received less than a majority, and which are worth 129 electoral votes — are all Catholic-rich (the exception is Tennessee). Catholics are also over-represented in potential swing congressional districts along the Great Lakes and in the Mississippi/Missouri/Ohio river valley.
- ☒ As others have pointed out, the Catholic vote is not monolithic. This is true: active Catholics constitute a coherent political constituency, inactive Catholics do not. What this means is that the political behavior and opinions of active Catholics can be explained, in part, by their Catholicism. For inactive Catholics, their "Catholicism" is not politically relevant.
- ☒ That the active Catholic vote is a swing constituency is obvious from its Presidential preferences: it supported Jimmy Carter in 1976; Ronald Reagan in 1980 & 1984 (Mondale did better among active Catholics than did Jimmy Carter in 1980); Michael Dukakis in 1988; George Bush in 1992; Clinton very narrowly edged out Dole in 1996. Clearly active Catholics do not merely reflect the national results; the Republican presidential nominee received a greater share of the active Catholic vote (versus the national vote) in 1980, 1992, and 1996.
- ☒ National election exit polls sponsored by the major news media do not ascertain respondents' religious activism, and so prevent the differentiation between active Catholics and "ethnic" Catholics. Lumping Catholics together serves to obscure the decisively important trends afoot among active Catholics. In particular, active Catholics have been participating in the migration of other religiously active groups out of the Democratic Party.
- ☒ Active Catholics are nearly as numerous (15% of the 1996 electorate) as the more famous white born-again, evangelical non-Catholic Christian constituency (18%).
- ☒ Four distinct trends among active Catholics in the period 1960-1996 give cause for optimism that conservative candidates can appeal successfully to this constituency:
  1. **The growing number of self-identified conservatives among active Catholics**, from 36% to 51%. Inactive Catholics have become more liberal during the same period.
  2. **The exodus of all Catholics, but especially active Catholics, out of the ranks of the Democratic Party** (falling from 67% in 1960 to 40% in 1996). However, active Catholics are noticeably reluctant to align with the Republican Party, even though they are willing to vote for Republican candidates.
  3. **The increasing propensity of active Catholics to vote for Republican candidates.** Democratic presidential candidates lost their lock on the Catholic vote in 1972, when both active and dormant Catholics cast a majority of their ballots for Richard Nixon. In 1980, not only did a majority vote of active Catholics vote for Republican Ronald Reagan, a greater percentage of them voted for Reagan than did the nation as a whole. This feat was repeated in 1992 and 1996.

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4. **Active Catholics represent an increasing share of the electorate.** After a decline from 1960 – 1988 in the proportion of Catholic voters attending weekly mass, this figure (mass attendance among Catholic voters) has rebounded a bit in the 1990s, increasing the electoral influence of active Catholics.

☒ While original research is needed to draw the explicit link between the Catholic Church's social teachings and Catholic voter behavior, existing public opinion data supports the conclusion that active Catholics have a distinct political identity.

1. Active Catholics are unusually patriotic, and believe in American exceptionalism.
2. Active Catholics are not anti-government, although they favor spending cuts. And though half consider themselves conservatives, active Catholics do not trust unbridled free markets; they see a role for government activism in the economic arena.
3. Active Catholics are fans of the traditional family structure, and many feel the prevailing popular culture makes the task of raising children more difficult.
4. Active Catholics are distinctly tolerant and do not savor political villains. Example: a majority consider homosexual sex to be wrong, but they oppose discrimination against homosexuals.
5. On other social issues, majorities of active Catholics ...
  - ... oppose abortion (but less adamantly than expected);
  - ... perceive sex between unmarried teenagers (14-16 years old) to be "always wrong" — but not other cases of premarital sex;
  - ... consider adulterous sex to be "always wrong;"
  - ... would tighten laws to make divorce more difficult.
6. Catholics are concerned about the poor — and overwhelmingly support recent reforms in the welfare program.
7. Catholics embrace the principle of equity — and overwhelmingly oppose job quotas and other elements of affirmative action which offend the American ideal of equality. In fact, Alexis deTocqueville identified Catholics (163 years ago) as the group of Americans most supportive of the principle of human equality.
8. The sense in which active Catholics can be said to be conservative may be this: they appreciate the necessity of a morally well ordered society to the pursuit of happiness (rejecting extremes of both individualism and collectivism).

☒ The explanation for the Catholic exodus from the Democratic Party seems to have been captured by Samuel Freedman in The Inheritance. The party committed these sins:

Identification with anti-Vietnam war protests (offensive to Catholic patriotism);  
Advocacy of affirmative action and economic redistribution (offensive to Catholic standards of equity and fairness);  
Promotion of moral permissiveness (drugs, promiscuity) and individual irresponsibility (subsidizing illegitimacy, non-employment).

☒ The active Catholic propensity to vote for Republican presidential candidates contributes to the growing dependence of the Republican Party on religiously active voters. This trend has provoked an adverse reaction among some in that party, who recommend avoiding "moral" or "social" issues. Yet this advice is contraindicated by the breath of the public's perception that America is in the throes of a moral crisis, recently exacerbated by the rash of schoolyard shootings.

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## The Centrality of the Catholic Vote

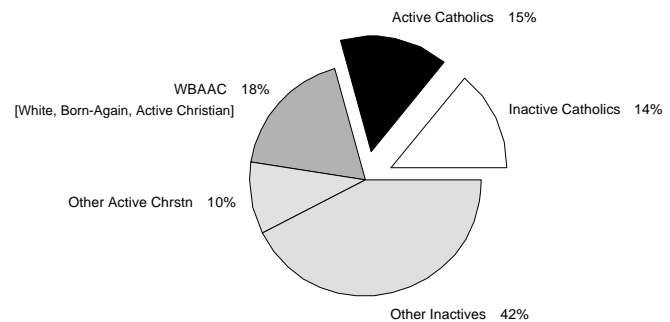
Dr. Ralph Reed had a vision. The former Executive Director of the Christian Coalition (now president of a political consulting firm in Atlanta) was a central participant in the forging of a conservative political identity for the nation's growing number of born-again, evangelical, and fundamentalist Christians, the inheritor of a process set in motion by the Rev. Jerry Falwell in the 1970's.

Reed's vision was of a Catholic and Christian conservative political collaboration, and this vision led him to invest substantially in the founding of an organization to do for Catholics what the Christian Coalition had done for non-Catholic Christian conservatives. The motivation (as Reed recently observed) was that a candidate for President espousing a socially conservative agenda can win every born-again, evangelical, and fundamentalist vote there is, but without the support of Catholics, that candidate is going nowhere.

Reed is literally correct. The heart of what the media rather condescendingly refer to as the "religious right" are the religiously-active, Christian (but non-Catholic), self-identified born-again, evangelical or fundamentalist voters. This constituency (which is here strictly defined) accounted for 18 percent of the Presidential vote in 1996. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of that vote went to Bob Dole. Had Dole won all of this vote, his national total would have been 45 percent (vice the 41% he actually received) — not enough to put Dole over the top. And in the real world of politics, such unanimity is not a possibility. Ronald Reagan, who established a conservative high-water mark with his 1984 vote total, received 78 percent of this religiously-active, conservative Christian vote.



### Key Religious Components of the Electorate based on actual 1996 turnout



QEV Analytics

source: National Elections Study, 1996

Meanwhile, twenty-nine percent of the voters in 1996 were Catholics. They went 54 percent for Clinton, 38 percent for Dole, 8 percent for Perot.

Many Catholic conservative activists share with Reed the frustration that religiously-active Catholics do not appear to be joining other religiously-active Christians in a migration toward the Republican Party and conservative habits of voting (in point of fact, as we will see, they are). The Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press — now the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press — was the first polling organization to publicly quantify this migration which has transformed American politics. In an October 1994 report, they noted that the opinion cluster dubbed, "Moralists" constituted 20 percent of registered voters, double what it had been in 1987, "as more religious and cultural conservatives — many of them former Democrats — have identified with the GOP." Unfortunately, the defining values of this constituency, "religious, socially intolerant and opposed to social welfare. Militaristic and xenophobic. Critical of big business as well as big government" are in nearly every regard anathema to the majority of Catholics.

The political battleground today is the upper or Industrial Midwest, at both the Congressional and Presidential level; states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Kentucky, and Missouri. With the exception of Illinois — and with the addition of Florida — these are the major states which Bob Dole lost most narrowly to Bill Clinton in 1996. This region, the Industrial Midwest (defined to include Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Missouri), is also distinctive because it is where a plurality of Catholic voters are to be found (edging out the Northeast), and it is where a plurality of the religiously-active, non-Catholic Christian, born-again, evangelical, and fundamentalist voters are to be found (28% of them are there, versus 25% in the South). So, the political Party and candidate which can implement Reed's vision of a Catholic and conservative Christian alliance will own the Industrial Midwest, and with it the center of gravity of national politics.

## The Presidential Elections in 2000

The 1996 Presidential election was something of an embarrassment to all contenders, perhaps to the winner most of all. First off, a stunning 17 million voters departed the electorate.

These were all former, most of whom voted for Perot or Bush in 1992 and then stayed home in 1996, turning thumbs-down to the options in a three-way race.

Bill Clinton won his second term with one of the most anemic reelection victories this century. He improved upon his 1992 vote total by a paltry 2.5 million, tiny relative to the typical second term victory margin.

Clinton, like Eisenhower in 1956, added no substantial new constituency to his coalition. Soccer Moms? He added 500,000 married female votes to his 1996 total, while 4.8 million decided to sit it out. Seniors? The 60+ age cohort went from being President Clinton's best age group in 1992 (on a percentage basis) to his worst in 1996. Youth? The Clinton vote fell among the 18-29 year olds by 1.2 million. Catholics?

With Catholics, he actually did do a bit better than in 1992, picking up an additional 2.3 million Catholic votes while Dole improved upon Bush's Catholic tally by 400,000 and Perot dropped 3.3 million. In terms of total turnout, the departure from the 1996 electorate of 1992 Catholic voters was nearly offset by first-time Catholic voters — and in a year in which voters were running for the exits, that is no small accomplishment.

Ross Perot was obviously embarrassed by the 11.6 million decline in his vote total from 1992 to 1996. Only one in five of Perot's 1992 voters became 1996 Perot voters. The nearly nine million 1992 Perot voters who stayed at home in 1996 represent a completed migration

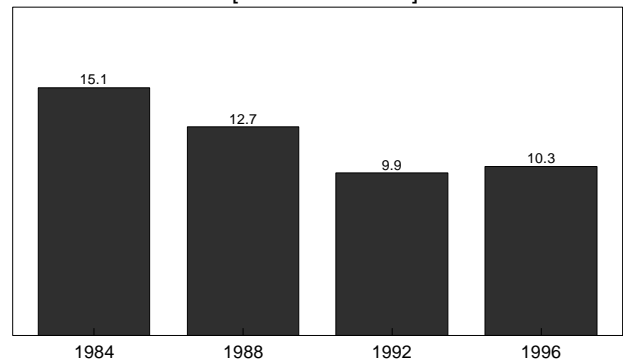
mainly out of the ranks of Republicans begun in 1992. 11.4 million of Perot's 19.7 million 1992 voters had supported George Bush in 1988. Less than half (4.8 million) went back to Dole in 1996.

And this is Bob Dole's greatest failure in 1996, to have improved upon George Bush's vote by only 100,000 in a year in which ultimately 15.8 million Perot 1992 voters would not be voting for Perot in 1996. But Bob Dole did accomplish two things: he stanching the Bush hemorrhage of Catholic voters, and he came closer to winning than is generally recognized. And these two things are not unrelated.



*Crisis Magazine* Analysis  
of the American Catholic Vote

Catholic Vote for Republican Presidential Candidate  
[millions of voters]



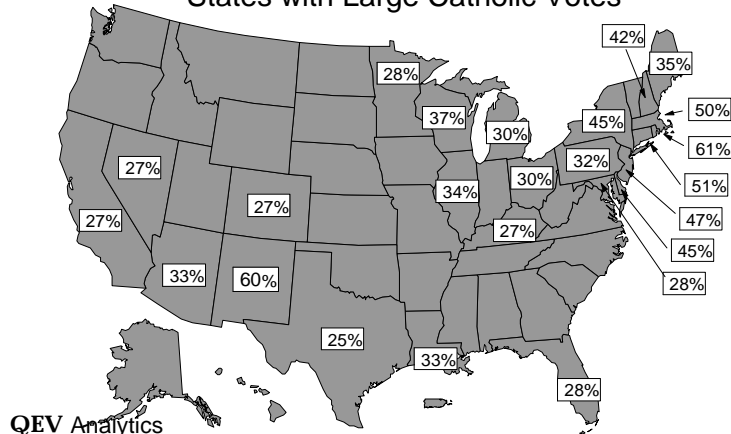
QEV Analytics

In 1984, Ronald Reagan's reelection was supported by 15 million Catholic voters. In 1988, George Bush received 12.7 million votes from Catholics. In 1992, his Catholic vote fell further to 9.9 million, a loss of 5 million since the Reagan high. Bob Dole's Catholic vote came in at 10.3 million, reversing at last the long decline.

As for Bob Dole winning, well: take those states which Clinton won with less than 50 percent, give the electoral votes to Dole, and



States with Large Catholic Votes



QEV Analytics

Wisconsin (Clinton, <50%; Catholic vote, 37%; electoral vote, 11).

Lest the point be too obscure: all of those states which Bob Dole came closest to winning are states, except for Tennessee, with large Catholic populations.

Consider a different hypothetical: if 15 percent of the national Catholic vote had shifted from Clinton to Dole — just the Catholic vote, holding other voter groups constant — Dole would have been elected, albeit with a minority of 45 percent of the popular vote.

Leader would be first-dog of the land instead of Buddy. These states are:

Nevada (for Clinton, 46%; Catholic vote, 27%; electoral votes, 4);

Kentucky (for Clinton, 46%; Catholic vote, 27%; electoral votes, 8);

Arizona (Clinton, 47%; Catholic vote, 33%; electoral votes, 8);

Ohio (Clinton, 48%; Catholic vote, 30%; electoral votes, 21);

Missouri (Clinton, 48%; Catholic vote, 22%; electoral votes, 11);

Florida (Clinton, 48%; Catholic vote, 28%; electoral votes, 25);

Tennessee (Clinton, 48%; Catholic vote, 9%; electoral votes, 11);

Oregon (Clinton, <50%; Catholic vote, 17%; electoral votes, 7);

Pennsylvania (Clinton, <50%; Catholic vote, 32%; electoral vote, 23); and,

Notice that most of these electoral votes which would shift to Dole are in the Industrial Midwest (Kentucky, Ohio, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin).

With a Shift in the Catholic Vote of ...	Dole Wins ...	Giving Dole an Electoral Vote Total of ... (270 needed)
2%	Kentucky Nevada	171
5%	Arizona	179
8%	New Mexico	184
11%	Florida Ohio	230
13%	New Hampshire	234
14%	Tennessee	245
15%	Missouri Pennsylvania Wisconsin	290

Of course, creating an isolated vote shift of 4.2 million Catholics would not have been a realistic campaign goal. In political terms, that would represent a huge migration against the

current, for the minority candidate. But the purpose of the illustration is to show, 1) that the upper Midwest is where the lowest hanging electoral college fruit is to be found by a Republican candidate; and 2) that because of where the Catholic vote is located, its electoral significance is magnified beyond its considerable size.

There are roughly 44 million Catholics of voting age in the United States today. A narrow plurality (31%) of them reside in the Industrial Midwest, while 29 percent are found in the Northeast. The Catholic vote is decisively important in these two regions, as it is in Florida, Texas, and California.

Of those states comprising the Industrial Midwest, Bob Dole carried one in 1996: Indiana. In the Northeast, he carried no states. As we have seen, Dole's margin of defeat in the Industrial Midwest was exceedingly narrow, as it was in Florida. Also, the combined electoral vote of these states, plus the states Dole actually won in 1996, are more than sufficient to achieve the 270 needed for election.

This calculation is not to advocate an ignoring of the Northeast. No conservative Presidential candidate starts out a campaign conceding California, or New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. But such a candidate ought to be clear about which states have the greatest likelihood of going for the conservative candidate — unless one believes each Presidential election is *sui generis*, so that there is nothing to be learned from the previous campaign.

Is there any cause for optimism that a conservative candidate can harness the Catholic voters in those states which Bob Dole lost? Yes, actually: in Florida, which Clinton carried with 48 percent, the Catholic vote for Clinton was 46 percent — even though Catholics in

Florida are more heavily Hispanic (18%) than are Catholics nationwide (6%). In California, which Clinton carried with 53 percent, Catholics gave him 52 percent, again a state with a well above the national average Hispanic presence (26%).

But in New Jersey — a state with a longstanding tradition of voting for Republican Presidential candidates — the percentage of Catholics who voted for Dole was fully 10 points higher than the statewide Dole percentage; in New York it was 9 points higher; in Michigan, 5 points; in Connecticut, Ohio and Florida, 2 points. It is as if the Dole campaign had already put a Catholic strategy into effect.

## Is There a "Catholic" Vote?

There are Catholics in America. Most of these Catholics vote. In fact, Catholics turnout to vote at a rate higher than the general public. But this does not, in and of itself, mean that "Catholic" constitutes a politically relevant designation, that there is a Catholic Vote in America. Perhaps Catholics simply mirror American society at large.

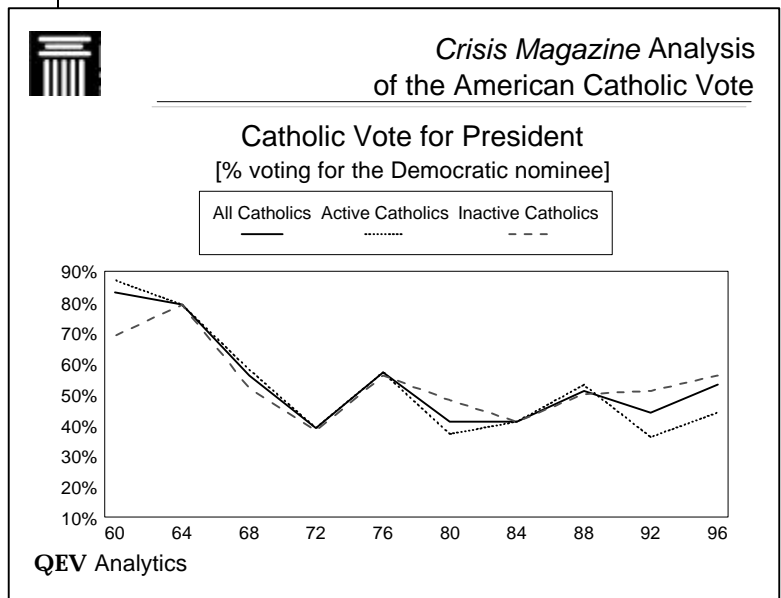
For there to be a meaningful Catholic Vote, the political orientation and behavior of Catholics would have to be explained, in part, by their Catholicism, by the fact of the label, "Catholic." There is a Catholic Vote if Catholics behave differently from the whole of the population of voters, if there is something differentiating about the Catholic experience in America and in their reaction to this experience.

There is good reason for skepticism at the outset: demographic characteristics typically are very poor indicators of the political behavior of individuals. Race is an exception: knowing a person is black tells you a lot about how they are likely to vote and about their partisan affiliation. But knowing someone is white tells you nothing at all. And despite the much ballyhooed gender gap, knowing someone is female tells you virtually nothing about their political orientations.

Demographic characteristics are poor predictors of political behavior and their predicative power is declining. This is due to the continuing "homogenization" of the American population. Homogenization does not mean we are all becoming alike; it means that distinct political types are being ever more thoroughly dispersed throughout the population. The old neighborhoods, the distinct and culturally-rich ethnic enclaves are

mostly gone. Knowing where someone lived once said a great deal about who their political heroes were; no longer. This is part of the process of homogenization.

Is the label "Catholic" politically relevant? The difference between Catholics and non-Catholics need not be stark; just enough to show that Catholicism is a significant variable, albeit one of many variables, for predicting the political orientation and behavior of respondents. An affirmative answer is encouraged by the unique political trek of Catholic voters have undertaken over the past 28 years.



### 1960

1960 was the high-water mark of Catholic political unity. In that year, Catholics voted overwhelmingly (83%) for their co-religionist, John Kennedy. Still, a split between active and inactive Catholics was distinctly visible: 87 percent of religiously-active Catholics voted for Kennedy, versus 69 percent of inactive Catholics.

Catholics elected Kennedy: Kennedy lost among the 49 percent of voters who are

religiously inactive non-Catholics, as he lost among every other religiously-active group.

Catholics overall accounted for 24 percent of turnout that year, but the long erosion in church attendance had begun. In 1964, 64 percent of Catholics attended Mass "regularly," down from 73 percent four years earlier. This proportion would ultimately fall to 40 percent in 1988, then rebound in the 1990's. Catholics in 1964 were still far and away the most active religious cohort.

Lyndon Johnson won 79 percent of the Catholic vote in 1964, down from John Kennedy's tally. But Johnson received a higher percentage of the inactive Catholic vote than had John Kennedy, and in so doing he unified the active and inactive Catholics — they would vote in tandem

until 1980.

1964 also saw the beginning of a long Catholic erosion in Democratic party affiliation. The first to defect were the inactive Catholics, whose ties to the Democratic Party were more tenuous to begin with. But among active Catholics, the intensity of Democratic affiliation dropped sharply in 1964: "strong Democrats" were 52 percent of active Catholics in 1960, but 32 percent of active Catholics in 1964.

1960 was a less secular time. Twenty-two percent (22%) of the electorate was Catholic in that election, and 73 percent of them attended church "regularly". Catholics were far more religiously active than either mainline Protestants (34% of whom went to Church regularly) or the "Pietistic and Neo-Fundamentalist" denominations (40% active). Religiously-active Catholics represented 17 percent of the turnout, about the same as active Pietistic/Neo-Fundamentalist Christians.

In 1960, almost two-thirds of Catholics were Democrats — mostly "strong" Democrats. Active Catholics were more Democratic and more intensely Democratic than inactive Catholics. Catholic households in that year were more likely to contain a veteran (45%) or a union member (40%) than were Protestant and non-Christian homes.

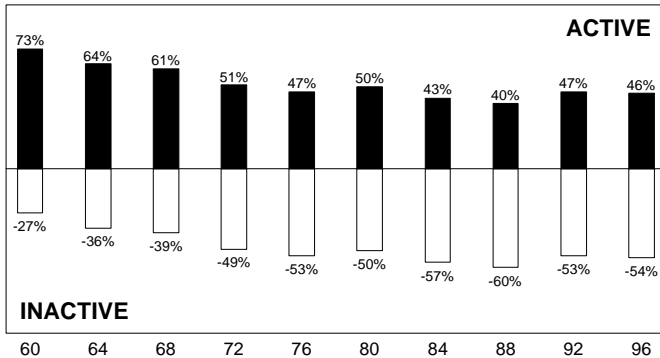
1964

By the 1964 Presidential Election, changes in the Catholic electorate were clearly afoot.



*Crisis Magazine Analysis*  
of the American Catholic Vote

Decline in Catholic Church Attendance Abates in '90s  
[Portion of Catholics attending mass "regularly"]



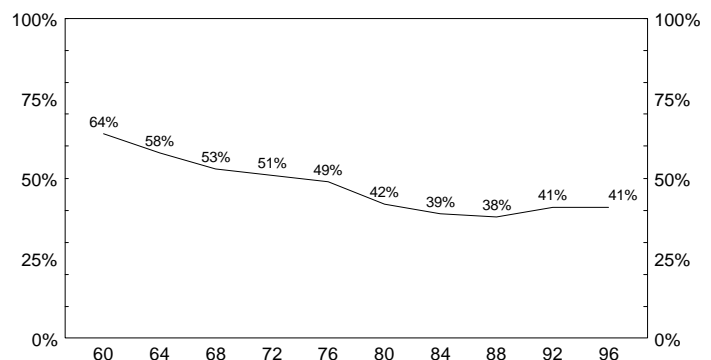
QEV Analytics

source: National Election Studies, 1960-1996



*Crisis Magazine Analysis*  
of the American Catholic Vote

Percentage of Catholics Saying They Are Democrats



QEV Analytics

On other issues, 73 percent of active Catholics in 1964 asserted we were doing the right thing in Vietnam, a much higher level of support for the American Vietnam policy than expressed by inactive Catholics or any other religious cohort. 1964 was also the first year the National Election Study began asking about prayer in the schools: 85 percent of active Catholics said schools should be allowed to begin their day with a prayer. Members of Pietistic and Neo-Fundamentalist denominations — from which would emerge the born-again/evangelical movement — were more supportive of school prayer (91% favored it).

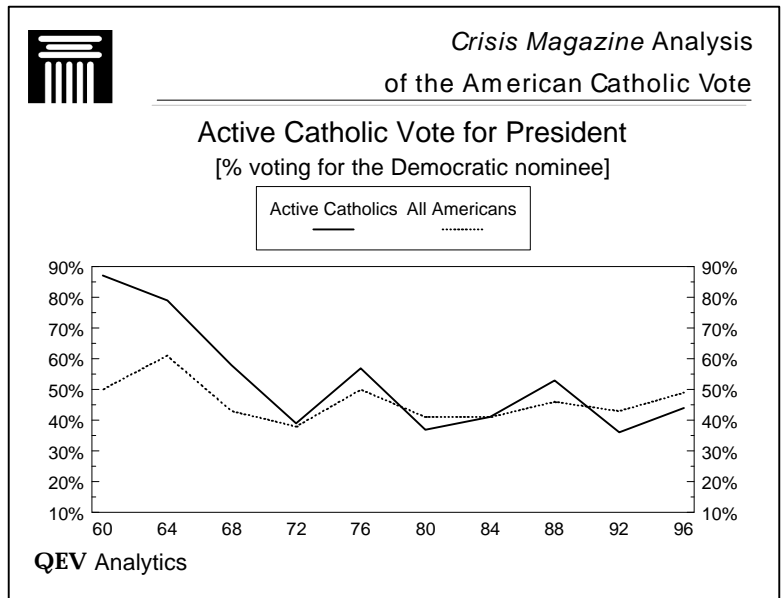
### 1968

Hubert Humphrey in 1968 did not do so well among Catholics as had his predecessor. The Democratic presidential vote fell to 58 percent among active Catholics, 52 percent among inactive Catholics. The Catholic exodus from the Democratic Party continued. Active Catholics by this year were still more likely to be Democrats than inactive Catholics, but they were becoming ever more tepid in their allegiance.

By 1968, a majority of active Catholics were of the opinion we should not have gotten involved in Vietnam — less skeptical than the national average, but representing a considerable lose of faith.

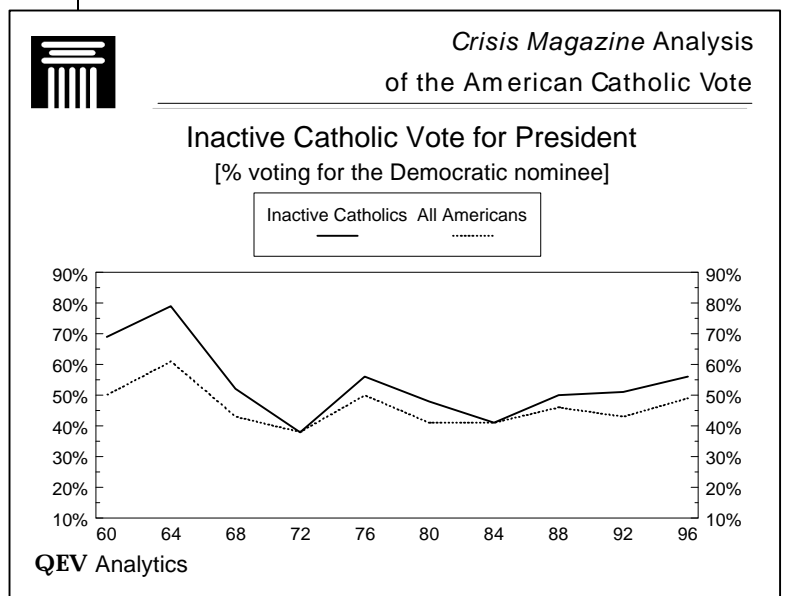
### 1972

1972 brought the Nixon landslide, against George McGovern, a man whom Adam Walinsky, in a 1976 memorandum to candidate Jimmy Carter on the "Catholic Problem," described as "the first



Democratic candidate since 1924 to come explicitly from the [William Jennings] Bryan party." "McGovern's nomination also represented the triumph of the new politics — all of the coalitions aligned against the remnants of the Al Smith party." Walinsky described Catholic reaction to McGovern as "rage."

In point of fact, however, Catholic "rage" against McGovern was not sufficient to prevent 39 percent of all Catholics from voting for him. Active and inactive Catholics gave McGovern the same percentage of their vote. The most



significant aspect of the 1972 result was that for the first time, the Catholic vote for the Democratic presidential candidate fell to the national average. Catholics — and particularly active Catholics — were no more likely to support the Democratic nominee than were voters at large. In 1972, Democrats lost their lock on the Catholic vote.

Catholic defections from the Democrat Party, as measured by party affiliation, continued but slowed in 1972. Barely half of Catholics now described themselves as Democrats. Not that they had become Republicans: only 14 percent of Catholics called themselves Republican in 1972, versus the 17 percent who said they were Republican in 1960; the huge Catholic migration out of the Democrat Party had been to the ranks of Independents. The historic Catholic anti-Republican bias would die very hard.

1972 was the first year the National Election Study asked respondents to describe their ideology. And interestingly, more active Catholics said they were conservative (36%) than did inactive Catholics (30%). Pluralities of both groups described themselves as moderates. But among inactive Catholics, there was a large liberal element (31%), which

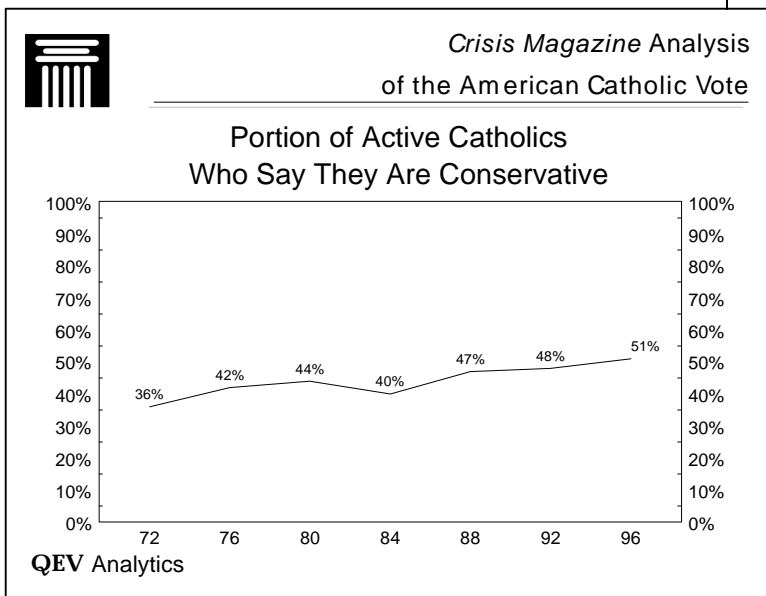
was less in evidence among active Catholics (of whom 19% said they were liberal). Ideology would prove to be one of the most divisive characteristics between active and inactive Catholics.

## 1976

Mr. Walinsky might well have fretted about the identification of his own man, Jimmy Carter, with the William Jennings Bryan wing of the Democratic Party. But Jimmy Carter successfully positioned himself as a "new Democrat" (of a good kind), and in the end experienced no "Catholic Problem," attracting 57 percent and 56 percent of the active and inactive Catholic vote, respectively — both better than the national average (but not by much).

In 1976, the ideological rift between active and inactive Catholics widened. In that year, a plurality of active Catholics (42%) declared themselves to be conservatives, while inactive Catholics remained evenly divided between liberals and conservatives, with a plurality in the middle.

1976 brought to the National Election Study the first question on abortion, a sad reflection on our times. Thirty-two percent of active Catholics said abortion should never be legal, and 56 percent said it should be legal only to save the life of the mother, yielding a 88 percent majority opposed to permissive abortions. Barely half (53%) of inactive Catholics agreed to a restrictive abortion regime, as did 73 percent of active Pietistic/Neo-Fundamentalist Christians and 71 percent of mainline Protestants — so active Catholics in 1976 were the most opposed to permissive abortion of any religious cohort.



In 1976, the exodus of Catholics from the Democrat Party abated among the inactive Catholics, continued among actives.

## 1980

In 1980, the ghost of William Jennings Bryan did come to haunt the Jimmy Carter reelection campaign. A majority of active Catholics voted for Ronald Reagan (54% to 37%, with 10% for John Anderson), while a plurality of inactive Catholics voted for Carter (48% to 44%, with 9% for Anderson). This result represents the first time within the scope of this historic retrospective that the Republican presidential candidate received a higher percentage of the vote from active Catholics than from the general public, an achievement with profound political and historic implications.

After three election cycles characterized by a gentle erosion, the Catholic affiliation with the Democratic Party took a sudden plunge in 1980 (relatively speaking), dropping from 49 percent to 42 percent. The GOP began to pick-up some of these defections, rising to 21 percent among active Catholics, and 11 percent among inactive Catholics.

The 1980 National Election Survey provided the first opportunity to examine the self-described "born-again, evangelical, or fundamentalist" vote, which would come to be credited with both of Ronald Reagan's victories, and with the 1994 Republican take-over of the House of Representatives. White, religiously-active Christians (but not Catholics), who described themselves as born-again, evangelical or fundamentalist made their statistical debut at 12 percent of the 1980 electorate, and gave 62 percent of their vote to Ronald Reagan. Active Catholics constituted 13 percent of the vote, and gave Reagan 58 percent — meaning these two cohorts deserve

equal credit for contributing to Reagan's first term victory.

In 1980, 75 percent of active Catholics reported that abortion either should never be legal, or should be legal only to save the life of the mother, a 15 percent decline since 1976 — leaving active Pietistic/Neo-Fundamentalist denomination members and mainline Protestant denomination members more opposed to abortion than active Catholics.

## 1984

The largest vote ever received by an American candidate for President was the 54.5 million, Ronald Reagan's 1984 tally. This represented 59 percent of the popular vote; Reagan's Catholic vote share was just a shy less at 58 percent. He appealed equally to active and inactive Catholics.

Of course, Ronald Reagan attracted a vast majority of the votes cast by Republicans — 94 percent. But his party gave him only half (53%) of his vote total. The other half came from Democrats and Independents. Much has been made of the "Reagan Democrat" vote, but actually Reagan's performance among Independents was more impressive: 25 percent of Democrats voted for him, versus 64 percent of Independents. The migration of Catholic voters from the Democratic Party to Independent status, coupled with Reagan's distinctive appeal among Catholic voters, created the conditions for Reagan's huge Catholic vote.

More than one-quarter of Ronald Reagan's total vote came from Catholics, but nearly one-third (31%) of the non-GOP Reagan vote: Catholics were key to Reagan's stunning success among non-Republicans. In total, Reagan received 15.1 million Catholic votes.

And the regional breadth of the Reagan appeal to Catholics was impressive. Reagan received the vote of 53 percent of Catholics in the non-coastal West, 57 percent in the Industrial Midwest, 60 percent in the Northeast — above the national average of 58 percent notwithstanding the region's liberal reputation — 61 percent in the Pacific, and 68 percent in South. These variations are quite modest — and undermine the perception of Northeast Catholics as lopsidedly and inevitably Democratic in their vote.

Fritz Mondale did better among active Catholics than Jimmy Carter, but Mondale's share of the inactive Catholic vote was considerably less than Carter's percentage. It certainly seems in retrospect that active Catholics were intent in 1980 on punishing Jimmy Carter.

1984 saw the nadir of active Catholic affiliation with the Democrat Party, at 37 percent. For the next three election cycles, this figure would hover slightly above that level.

### 1988

The Republican retreat from the Reagan high in popular vote — particularly the Republican erosion among Catholics — began at first opportunity, with the 1988 election. George Bush received 48.9 million votes against Michael Dukakis, down 5.6 million. Numbered among Bush's total were 12.7 million Catholics, meaning Bush received 2.4 million fewer Catholic votes than did Ronald Reagan in 1984. Bush held on to 73 percent of the Catholic Reagan vote; 27 percent defected to the Democratic candidate (by comparison, only 15% of Protestants switched sides). The lowest decline among the various regions was in the NE, which meant this region delivered

Bush's second highest Catholic percentage — 52 percent — trailing only Southern Catholics.

Bush's losses were disproportionate among active Catholics. Of the 2.4 million of Reagan's Catholic voters whom he lost, 2.1 million were active Catholics. Other key groups among whom decline was pronounced: one million were Democrat Catholics, 1.7 were Independent Catholics (Bush actually gained in Republican Catholic votes over Reagan by 300,000). 2.8 million of the Catholic vote loss was among union members (Bush's non-union vote improved over Reagan). 1.2 million votes were lost in the Industrial Midwest; 500,000 were lost in the South. 2.5 million votes were lost from Catholics households earning less than \$30,000 per year (which a bit above the national average). Among age groups, the greatest loss was suffered among the 18-24 age cohort, down 800,000 votes. The loss was equally male and female. In short, Bush failed to reconstruct the archetypal Reagan "Democrat" coalition: voters who are non-Republican, union members, of modest income, who live in the Industrial Midwest — and are active Catholics.

In 1988, George Bush retained virtually all of the inactive Catholic vote, and improved upon Ronald Reagan's performance with Catholic groups which conform to the stereotypical GOP coalition: member of the Republican Party, senior, upper income, Western. Consistent with this observation, in 1988 active Catholics began returning to the Democrat Party, while the proportion of inactive Catholics in the Democrat Party reached its nadir.

### 1992

In 1992, the Catholic vote for the Republican presidential nominee fell again — dramatically

— to 9.9 million votes. This represents a GOP loss of 2.8 million Catholic votes between 1988-1992, and a decline of 5.2 million from the high of 1984. And this decline occurred despite an extraordinarily high 1992 turnout which inflated the Bush vote total.

Ross Perot drew his 19.7 million votes (19% of votes cast) disproportionately from Bush: 11.4 million Perot voters had voted for Bush in 1988; 3.4 million had voted for Dukakis (the balance were first-time voters, or third party voters in 1988). Active Catholics and inactive Catholics were equally drawn to Perot (22% and 21% respectively, voted for him).

Bush's active Catholic vote in 1992 appears to have rebounded from 1988; his 1992 loss was greatest among inactive Catholics. Otherwise, the Catholic groups evincing the greatest Bush exodus were quintessential Perot-type voters: middle age, middle income, non-union, conservative.

Having shunned Bush in 1988, active Catholics now turned their backs on Clinton, giving him 37 percent of their votes, versus the national average of 43 percent. What this means in historic terms is that 1992 set the post-1960 low for the percentage of active Catholics voting for the Democratic Presidential nominee. It also means that George Bush — despite his distinct lack of appeal among active Catholics in 1988 — beat Clinton among this voter group (42% to 37%).

Inactive Catholics, on the other hand, liked what they saw in Clinton, and gave him 51 percent of their votes, versus 28 percent for Bush, a huge margin. This active/inactive Catholic dynamic is a subplot of a larger drama: the increasing reliance of Republican Presidential nominees on votes from the religiously active. In 1992, 54 percent of Bush's vote came from the religiously active. For Dole

in 1996, the religiously active would account for 57 percent of his total vote.

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### *1994 (Congressional Election)*

The assertion has appeared in print that Catholics participated in the seismic 1994 elections by casting a majority of their ballots for Republican House candidates. Were this true, it would represent quite a swing and a dramatic threshold occurrence.

Unfortunately, the Mitofsky International exit poll conducted for the New York Times (et al) found that 52 percent of Catholics voted for the Democratic House candidate. Catholics live disproportionately in districts with Democratic incumbents (62% versus 38%), and in Congressional elections the critical variable is the voters' willingness to vote against the incumbent. Nationwide, 24 percent of all voters selected a challenger candidate. Among Catholics, this figure was 23 percent. Among white, active, born-again voters, 33 percent preferred the challenger.

Catholics represented 13 percent of the electorate in 1994. By two-to-one, these Catholics voters were mostly religiously active. This again makes the point that active Catholics have a high propensity to turnout in elections.

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### *1996*

Which brings us to 1996. This most recent Presidential election was historically distinctive in several regards. The Catholic share of the electorate (those actually voting that year) rose to 29 percent — the highest level by far in the post 1960 period. Of that, 15 percent was contributed by active Catholics (a share of the electorate unequalled since 1972) and 14

percent by inactive Catholics. By contrast, the category White, religiously-active Christian (non-Catholic) born-gain/evangelical/fundamentalist voters accounted for 18 percent of the electorate, and cast 68 percent of their votes for Dole. This was the first year this constituency exceeded the size of the active Catholic vote.

Active Catholics narrowly preferred Dole to Clinton (47% to 44%). The Perot vote fell to 7 percent among actives. Inactive Catholics preferred Clinton to Dole, by the margin of 56 to 33 percent. Nine percent of inactive Catholics voted for Perot. Overall, Clinton won the Catholic vote, 53 to 38 percent.

Catholic affiliation with the Democratic Party stabilized at 41 percent, with 20 percent identifying themselves as strong Democrats. And for the first time in the post-1960 era, half of active Catholics identified themselves as conservatives, while a plurality of inactive Catholics — also for the first time — identified themselves as liberals.

In the 1996 National Election Study, the question concerning opinion on abortion was changed, adding a response option so that respondents seemingly were given every opportunity to provide a pro-abortion response. Therefore, the 1996 results cannot be compared strictly with the earlier NES questions on abortion. In 1996, 19 percent of active Catholics said abortion should never be permitted, and 40 percent said abortion should be legal in cases of rape, incest, or when the mother's life is threatened. 13 percent selected the peculiar option that abortions should be legal "when the (unspecified) necessity of them is clearly established." Twenty-six percent (26%) of active Catholics believe the right of a woman to obtain an abortion should be enshrined into law. Among inactive Catholics, the latter option is the choice of 50 percent,

meaning inactive Catholics are now indistinguishable on the abortion issue from other non-religious persons. In 1996, religiously-active Catholics took a back seat to religiously active "Pietistic/Neo-Fundamentalist" denomination members and mainline Protestant denomination members in the degree of their opposition to abortion.

In the ten Presidential elections and 37 years spanning the period 1960 to 1996, the period which yielded the data for this retrospective, Catholic voters evidenced five distinct dynamics:

1. The decline, then stabilization of the portion of Catholics who are religiously active.
2. The decline in Democratic Party affiliation among religiously-active Catholics.
3. The ideological divergence of active and inactive Catholics, with active Catholics becoming more conservative, and inactive Catholics becoming more liberal.
4. The divergence in voting behavior of active and inactive Catholics, with a gap first visible in 1980, becoming pronounced in 1992.
5. The inclination of active Catholics to cast a greater percentage of their votes for the Republican presidential candidate than the national population as a whole, first in 1980.

These dynamics make the case persuasively that Catholics have traveled a unique political road over the past four decades. But it is also clear that inactive Catholics have increasingly come to resemble other religiously-inactive, Democratic-leaning populations.

In what sense are inactive Catholics “Catholic?” Since the characteristic self-identified Catholic subsumes two widely divergent political traditions, in order to achieve clarity about the distinctiveness of the Catholic Vote, it is necessary to jettison one or the other, actives or inactives.

So when we speak of the Catholic Vote, we need to limit ourselves to those who actually practice their religion, and not encompass those who themselves embrace the label but not the religion. It is possible that the politics of inactive Catholics is somehow reflective of their relationship with the Church, perhaps even of their spirituality; more likely they constitute a demographic group with a common heritage but nothing which binds them together into the future.

On the other hand, it is apparent from their history that the political orientation of active Catholics is reflective of their Church membership and of their spirituality. This definition of the Catholic Vote, limited to practicing Catholics, is also convenient from the point-of-view of political practicality. It does no good to practitioners to define a constituency which can not be addressed. But active Catholics are reachable both by medium of communications and by content. We know where they are on Sunday. We find them in the Knights of Columbus and Legions of Mary. They subscribe to religious publications and purchase religious artifacts. Just as importantly, active Catholics are likely to be sympathetic to a particular content in political communications.

Here is where the obligatory notation goes that the Catholic Vote is not monolithic. True, active Catholics are Hispanic, African-American, White, Northeastern, Midwestern, young, old, wealthy, poor, union members and business executives, Republican, Independent

and Democrat. All of these characteristics will have an impact on a person's political behavior. But what we are arguing here is that there is also an overlying commonality which unites these disparate persons. And this commonality is reflected in the trends of the group's political behavior.

## The Catholic Political Identity

So it turns out, on careful examination, that active Catholics are participating in the migration of religiously-active persons, if not into the Republican Party, then at least into the vote totals of Republican candidates. The question now is, why?

This would be the place to reveal why Catholic voters abandoned their roots to vote for Ronald Reagan, then drifted away incrementally from George Bush — disaggregating the Reagan coalition. But an exhaustive analysis of the data contained in the National Election Study, which conducted interviews before and after the 1988, 1992, and 1996 Presidential elections, and the ABC and Voter News Service exit polls for these years, failed to produce a satisfactory answer. These migrating Catholics have no distinctive political characteristic, no cluster of issues about which they felt strongly, which would account for their defection from Bush — Vice President and heir-apparent of the man whom they so enthusiastically supported in 1984. George Bush eschewed the articulation of his own political identity in 1988, in favor of wrapping himself in the Reagan mantle. Nonetheless, a substantial number of Catholics, particularly active Catholics, voted for Michael Dukakis. For all of our vast collection of data, the best we can say is that many Catholics in 1988 just didn't like George Bush all that much. Or perhaps they felt more comfortable with Michael Dukakis: urbanite, Northeasterner, Greek Orthodox.

This is a thoroughly dissatisfying explanation — that in the end, Catholics voted on image. Politics is ultimately about content, not context. This is a point on which Jeff Greenfield, ABC News political commentator and author of arguably the best book ever written on political tactics (*Playing to Win*), and Dick Morris agree (Morris occupies the

opposite end of the sublime-to-ridiculous continuum from Greenfield, but he offers supportive testimony in his account of the 1996 campaign, *Behind the Oval Office*): issues, both say, determine the outcome of elections.

It is not surprising that conventional surveys are unable to account for Catholics' voting patterns, because polls like the network exit polls and the National Election Study do not seek to discern the impact of a voter's religious commitments on their voting behavior. The question of whether the response of active Catholics to particular candidates is influenced by their spirituality must be left to future research.

Still, we can certainly make some informed generalizations about the political attitudes of active Catholics, though these generalizations apply equally to Catholics who changed their votes in 1988 and 1992, and those who did not.

What do Catholics — active Catholics — think? Here are a few answers:

1. They are distinctively patriotic. American exceptionalism — the idea that America is a country with a historic mission and unique global importance, is deeply felt. Catholics are not particularly pro-military — owing, I think, to the fact so many have served in the military — but they feel pride at seeing the American flag, they have a more positive image of the institutions of our government than other religious cohorts, they love their country.
2. Active Catholics are not anti-government. Like most Americans, a majority of active Catholics would like to see cuts in federal government spending (79%, versus 83% of the general public), and they feel the federal government wastes a lot of money. But active Catholics are not in favor of

government retreating from its role in society. Perhaps most striking is this question:

spending or increase the deficit in order to lower taxes.

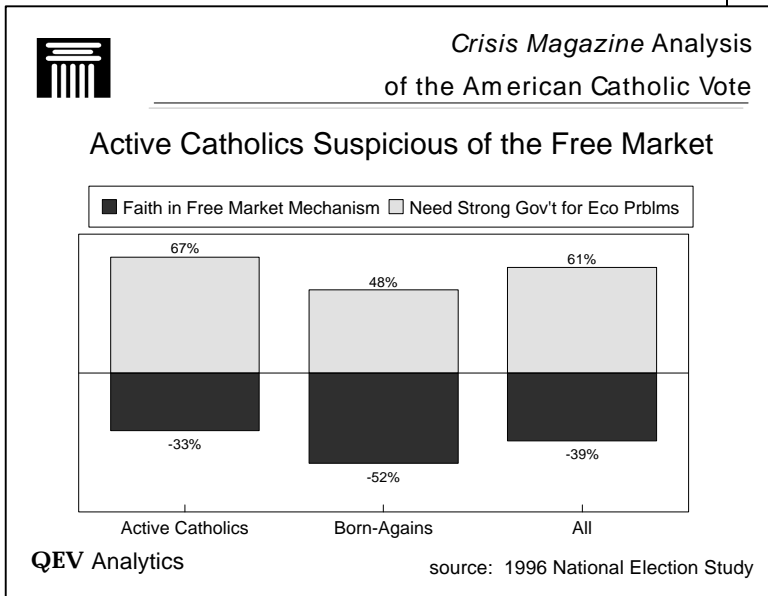
4. Active Catholics are fans of the traditional family structure. Many feel the prevailing popular culture is making the task of raising children more difficult.

5. Catholics are generally tolerant and do not savor political villains. They tend to express more positive opinions of virtually every group than the general public. A Catholic "love the sinner, hate the sin" ethos is suggested by responses to questions concerning homosexuality: 65 percent say homosexual sex is "always wrong" (compared to 57% at large), while a similarly large majority favor laws barring employment discrimination against homosexuals.

On a "feeling thermometer" question, in which respondents pick a number between 0 and 100 to represent their opinion of various groups, active Catholics average a 41 regarding homosexuals, above the national average of 40, above the average for Pietistic Protestants of 28, below the average of 43 for the religiously-inactive.

6. On other social issues, active Catholics remain opposed to abortion, but less adamantly than expected. A minority (26%) hold that premarital sex is "always wrong" (about the same as the national average), although sex between unmarried teenagers (14-16 years old) is perceived to be "always wrong" by 75 percent of active Catholics (vice 68% of the general public).

Interestingly, adulterous sex (with someone other than a spouse) is said to be "always wrong" by a larger majority, 87 percent (vice 78% at large). Eighteen percent of active Catholic males and 6 percent of



Even though many consider themselves conservatives, active Catholics do not seem to trust unbridled free markets. They see a role for government activism in the economic arena. In this opinion, active Catholics are not much different from the general public; even half of white, active, born-again voters agree.

Our hypothetical explanation is that Catholics tend to be concerned about the outcome of policies; they are not economically laissez-faire, because they are interested less in the process than in the results, namely, the management of the economy for maximum societal benefit. This may be an expression of the bedrock Catholic social principle of solidarity with the poor. Catholics are not ideologically opposed to the concept of managing for socially beneficial results (of course, the feasibility of this is open to question).

3. Active Catholics report their taxes are too high, but they do not want either to cut

active Catholic females admit to having committed that sin. Eighteen percent of active Catholics are divorced.

7. The traditional Catholic position on divorce is pronounced in the public opinion data. Sixty percent of active Catholics would tighten laws so as to make divorce more difficult, as would 49 percent of the general public.
8. Catholics are concerned about the plight of the poor, and they overwhelmingly support recent reforms in the welfare program. Most Catholic laity understand that one cannot express solidarity with the poor and resist profound reform of the status quo.
9. Catholics embrace the goal of racial equality, such as in employment, but are overwhelmingly opposed to job quotas and other elements of affirmative action which offend the American ideal of equality.
10. Perhaps most profound yet subtle of all their characteristics, active Catholics accept the existence of an absolute standard of morality. This ought to lead to a certain moral confidence, less confusion about the difference between pluralism and tolerance, and greater resistance to the rights claim of a moral right to do wrong, which is a central element of contemporary liberalism.

It may not be obvious from this attitudinal inventory just why active Catholics have been exiting the Democratic Party, and why they are less reliable supporters of Democratic candidates at the national level. Samuel Freedman tackled this question in [The Inheritance](#), his lyrical account of how three Catholic families migrated over the course of three generations from ethnic, blue collar, union, hard-core Democrats to college-educated, middle-class, politically-active

Republicans. Wittingly or not, Freedman's three anecdotal case histories seem to chronicle the three offenses of the Democratic Party committed in the eyes of Catholics: Tim Carey, from Irish Catholic roots in Hell's Kitchen and Ossining, New York, became a Republican largely as the result of his perception that the Democratic Party looked kindly on the post-1968 anti-Vietnam War protests. The Maeby/Obrycki family, Polish Catholics from Baltimore via Albany, became Republican in reaction to the Democratic Party advocacy of affirmative action and economic redistributive policies. Frank Trotta, Italian Catholic from New Rochelle, became Republican over the permissiveness and moral "pluralism" evident in the New Rochelle housing project where his father worked as a janitor.

Catholics began leaving the Democrat Party in the early 1960's, an exodus which has coincided with an increasing identification of the party with liberalism — not the liberalism of the progressive era, but a new liberalism. Contemporary liberalism has less to do with helping people than it does with government paternalism (articulated by Mrs. Clinton during her "politics of meaning" phase as a concern with the mutability of human nature), the promotion of secularism, and individual moral license. No, practicing Catholics do not feel welcome in such a home.

Catholics are often accused of being big government liberals, and perhaps that is not an unfair characterization of inactive Catholics. But as we have seen, active Catholics increasingly describe themselves as conservatives, despite their aversion to anti-government rhetoric. This, coupled with their professed support for government economic intervention, raises the question, "in what possible sense are they conservatives?" To find a response, we need to leave the strictly

empirical arena and become inferential, because the data are not available to answer our question directly.

Contemporary conservatism has come to be identified with tax cuts, an aversion to government, and individualism (under the influence of libertarianism). But there was an earlier conception of conservatism which was rooted in an appreciation that the moral ecology (a memorable term Robert George uses in Making Men Moral) of the community is inextricably linked to the ability of its citizens to pursue authentic happiness. Such a conservatism is concerned about creating an environment in which parents are aided in their task of raising children to be morally upright adults, and in which adults are encouraged to carry on their personal struggle toward salvation. Can it be that this is the kind of conservatism which Catholics have in mind, in some inchoate way, when they call themselves conservatives? If so, these Catholic conservatives understand that there is not a choice to be made between individual rights and collective interests, these are indivisible.

This is the conservatism of Abraham Lincoln. Here is what Harry Jaffa said about Lincoln's conception: "...the Declaration [of Independence] conceives of just government mainly in terms of the relief from oppression. Lincoln conceives of just government far more in terms of the requirement to achieve justice in the positive sense; indeed, according to Lincoln, the proposition "all men are created equal" is so lofty a demand that the striving for justice must be an ever-present requirement of the human and political condition. (Crisis of the House Divided, page 321).

The question of the Catholic political identity is very much wrapped in America herself. Charles Morris' majestic history of the Catholic Church in America (American Catholic) is

nonetheless disappointing in two regards: the rigor of his analysis collapses altogether in the penultimate chapter, where he advises to allow priests to marry as a panacea for the vocations crisis, and after building a spectacular case for the unique success of the Church in America, he fails to ask the obvious question, "what is it about America that the Catholic Church has found here such fertile ground?"

The answer is, because America is a Catholic project. This is not to say the American project is in any way antithetical to other religions, but rather that America is integrally consistent with Catholic spirituality. As is so often the case, Alexis de Tocqueville provides an explanation (De Tocqueville, after Shakespeare, is the best argument against the perfectibility of human wisdom, as there will never be a more insightful analysis of America than Democracy in America).

De Tocqueville writes that Catholics "constitute the most republican and the most democratic class in the United States. ... the Catholic faith places all human capabilities upon the same level; it subjects the wise and the ignorant, the man of genius and the vulgar crowd, to the details of the same creed; it imposes the same observances upon the rich and the needy, it inflicts the same austerities upon the strong and the weak; it listens to no compromise with mortal man, but, reducing all the human race to the same standards, it confounds all distinctions of society at the foot of the same altar, even as they are confounded in the sight of God" (Democracy in America, page 311). The pursuit of the equality of man, which is the soul of the American project, is in the hearts of Catholics.

Pro-choice Republican activists bring Catholic anxiety about contemporary conservatism into sharp relief: many of them justify their pro-abortion position by asserting that

"conservatism means smaller government."  
But the mainstream active Catholic conception of conservatism is not the creation of a society made safe for abortion. In a Catholic view, this represents a profound confusion, that ideological commitments to smaller government can take precedence to the pursuit of human equality.

The other thing which seems to offend Catholics about Republicans is that Republicans sound too materialistic. No poetry comes from the mouths of Republicans about social integrity and our interdependence; this is a rhetoric theme Mario Cuomo is particularly accomplished at delivering. Republicans often do seem to really believe all of society's ills can be cured with tax cuts. Yet all Republicans need to do to win Catholics over is to focus on how government is injurious to the commonweal — but then that requires a good bit of intellectual heavy-lifting.

Father Richard John Neuhaus used the metaphor of a conversation to describe the process of our on-going exploration of the meaning of Christian revelation: "Catholicism claims to possess a ministerial ordering of the continuing conversation that is apostolic Christianity's reflection on God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ." (Doing Well and Doing Good, page 88). This is an apt metaphor of politics as well, through which we collectively seek to conduct a coherent conversation about how as a political community we are to explore the dimensions of and implement our most essential founding principle, the equality of man. Elections and campaigns are an essential part of this conversation by which we decide where we are going as a society.

The United States is in the midst of a societal crisis. Everyone seems to perceive this crisis except for the peoples' elected officials and the

hired bureaucrats in Washington. Polls have found that 80 percent of the American public agree with the proposition that "there is a crisis of declining individual morality in the country today." In other than economic terms, the country is decidedly not on the right track. It is extraordinary that 80 percent of the people agree about anything. What confuses pollsters and politicians about our current crisis is that there are so many manifestations of it: drugs, crime, deteriorating schools, incivility, infanticide, illegitimacy, and now we can add cold-blooded shootings in the school yard.

So far, the political class has conspired to not engage in a conversation about how we are to arrest our current decline. But politics abhors a vacuum, and active Catholic voters will help to initiate the conversation on social renewal. In the end, active Catholics want the same thing as other voters; they want hope that tomorrow will be better than today. Their spirituality influences, strongly I believe, what sort of political language will convey that hope with credibility. That Catholics would have explicitly in mind the principles of their Church's social teachings when they go to vote is unrealistic; but in their political attitudes there does seem to resonate the echos of solidarity with the poor, subsidiarity of social action, the just wage. Or I am hearing things?

## The Republican Party's Resistance to a Catholic Strategy

A debate over the future of the Republican Party has been joined. Articles have recently appeared suggesting the Southern base of the Republican Party is a major impediment to its further success: Christopher Caldwell wrote of "the Southern Captivity of the GOP" in the June issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, John Harwood wrote an article for the *Wall Street Journal* this August titled, "South's Dominance of GOP Stirs Some Alarm in Party." Kieran Mahoney & Associates, a New York City based Republican political consultancy with ties to Governor George Pataki and Senator Al D'Amato, got some press in August with a survey purporting to show that a "moral agenda" imperils support for the party in the Northeast.

Ironically, liberal Democratic pollsters Stan Greenberg and Celinda Lake conducted a survey this summer on behalf of Emily's List which draw the opposite conclusion. They wrote in their analysis that an increasing public focus on moral issues makes unlikely a Democratic take-over of the House this year, a stunning but doubtless accurate admission.

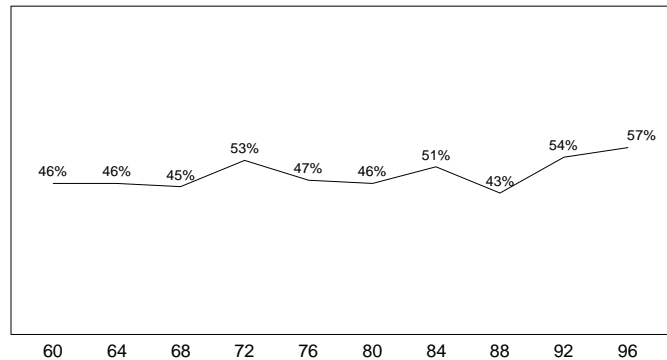
I don't know Mr. Caldwell or the persons quoted by Mr. Harwood personally, so it would be wrong to suggest they are guilty of disingenuousness. But much of the criticism of the role of Christian conservatives within the Republican Party has more to do with an aversion to the increasing reliance of the Party upon the religiously active for its votes — a long standing trend — than it does with an authentic concern with what is in the best interests of the Republican Party. One indication of this is that these arguments, while provocative, are thinly grounded in any kind of data, or based on a rigorous analysis of the costs

and benefits of the strategies advocated. The real agenda here is to make sure that the Republican Party remains a safe place for Libertarians.



*Crisis Magazine* Analysis  
of the American Catholic Vote

Percentage of Republican Prez Vote Coming from the Religiously Active



QEV Analytics

These instances of complaints against the Southern wing of the Republican Party purpose to show the way toward greater Republican success in the Northeast. But an authentic strategy for Republican success in the Northeast would not begin by offending the Christian conservative base of the Party in the South and Midwest. Were a Democrat to proffer this advice, he would be dismissed for the mischief of advancing a Brer Rabbit ("don't throw me in that briar patch") gambit. Wise Democrats would like nothing better than for Republicans to alienate their more robust base of support.

For reasons which hopefully are now quite clear, traditional Republican rhetoric often does not maximize the Party's potential appeal among active Catholics. But the prescription that the Party avoid any commentary on America's social crisis, on which voters are singularly focused today, is utterly counter-indicated. The Republican Party is too dependent on the religiously-active today to go

back. The way forward is to implement a strategy for increasing the Party's appeal among religiously active cohorts, and the biggest growth potential in that category resides with Catholics. The best strategy for Republicans is to initiate this conversation with the voters about our social crisis — before Democrats appropriate as their own this cluster of issues.

