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Biden, Ryan talk faith to America mag

Joshua J. McElwee | Oct. 12, 2012 NCR Today

The two vice presidential candidates, who for the first time in U.S. history are both Catholics, have spoken to the Jesuit-run *America* magazine about how their faith informs their views on war, poverty, and vocation.

In an interview posted to the magazine's website today, Democratic Vice President Joe Biden and Republican Congressman Paul Ryan each answer the same five questions posed to their campaigns by *America*'s editors [1]. A rundown of key quotes:

Biden:

- On war: War is only justified when a threat is ?grave and certain. Every effort must be made to peacefully avoid conflict.?
- On poverty: Biden recalls that his father would never pass someone asking for money on the street: ?My dad would say, ?Do you think if he had a real choice, he?d be standing here???
  Biden continues: ?Given the chance, and the mental capacity, people will respond to incentives. That?s why I was able to support the welfare-to-work legislation when I was a senator. That?s why I have supported nutrition and health care programs for children.?
- On talking to the pope: ?I was impressed by his openness and insights. If we had a chance to meet again, I?d like to hear more about his recent trip to Lebanon, his thoughts about the Arab Spring and his concerns about religious intolerance.?
- On greatest conflict between being Catholic and a politician: ?My faith has not caused me conflict, but has given me grounding.? Biden continues: ?Catholic social doctrine has been the principle that has guided the votes and positions I have taken throughout my career.?

Ryan:

- On war: ?Only by the confident exercise of American influence are evil and violence overcome.? Ryan gives four circumstances under which he says sending troops into combat should be an option.
- On poverty: ?To begin to understand the human suffering involved, it is important to look at those you serve in the eye. We must recognize the dignity of every one of God?s children.?
  Ryan continues: ?My Catholic faith champions a preferential option for the poor. This does not translate into a preferential option for bigger government.?
- On talking to the pope: ?I would humbly ask him for his prayers for the well-being of the people of our nation without exception.?
- On greatest conflict between being Catholic and a politician: ?Frankly, I have never had a serious conflict of conscience as a Catholic in politics. The reason for this is that I have come to recognize that my obligations as a Catholic are in agreement with my political obligations under our Constitution.?

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Links:
[1] http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=13646