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Iowa bishop buys ad space for Election Day message

Dennis Coday | Nov. 5, 2012 NCR Today

I received a call from a reader in Sioux City, Iowa, this morning. The reader wanted us ? and all visitors to the *NCR* website ? to know that the bishop of Sioux City Iowa, **Most Reverend R. Walker Nickless [1],** bought a half page ad in this Sunday?s *Sioux City Journal*, to spread his message about Election Day 2012. The 11 inch by 11 inch ad appeared on page 14A, the back page of the front section of Sunday?s paper. Half of the ad is a photo of an adult hand holding the hand of a baby. The other half of the advertisement are the following words. The bold is in the ad:

How we vote in the upcoming election is of the utmost importance. Even our salvation may depend on it. Many moral and prudential issues are at stake, and Catholics are not single-issue voters. But one issue stands above all in its gravity and its consequences.

Abortion is our nation?s gravest injustice

The blood of 55 million murdered babies ?cries out to heaven for justice.? It is always gravely sinful to support or condone abortion. Abortions? mere legality corrupts our culture, our government, and the rule of law.

As you **vote this year you have a chance to speak up for the defenseless unborn.**

Your vote can save innocent lives.

Supporting the dignity of all human life I remain your bother in Christ.

(signed) +R. Walker Nickless

Bishop Walker Nickless

Diocese of Sioux City

The diocesan coat of arms is in the lower left hand corner of the ad, with address, phone number and website information

I asked the caller if some kind of initiative was on the ballot that has anything to do with abortion. The caller said, no. Why then focus so heavily on abortion? If our salvation may depend on how we vote this election, to what vote is Bishop Nickless referring? If I were a member of the Sioux City diocese, I sure would like to know.

Trying to gain some insight into this question, I visited the Sioux City diocese?s website where I found Bishop Nickless? column ?The Shepherd Writes.? The most recent one **addresses the election in equally as strident terms** **[2]**. I will quote it at lengthen, so you get the full sense o f Nickless? message:

?? we must make our faith the foundation of our political life. The Gospel implies clear priorities for the social order, and identifies clear evils that cannot be supported or condoned by our silence or imprudent choices. And because there can be no separation between faith and life, voting for something contrary to the tenets of faith in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ may be a serious sin.

?The gravest, most urgent, and most destructive evil of our time is abortion. As Catholics, this is our most important issue. The scale of abortion?s evil is unprecedented: 55 million American babies murdered since 1973, along with tens of millions more in other countries, and uncountable lives of mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters twisted or broken by guilt and grief. The scope of abortion?s consequences on society and the economy is also vast: laws and the rule of law corrupted, justice denied, politics twisted and embittered, an unbridgeable gulf dividing our nation, marriages and families destroyed, productive workers eliminated, and on and on. As long as abortion is legal, the slaughter and the injustice will continue. It is imperative for our faith, that we as Catholics witness boldly against both the appalling fact of abortions, and the corrosive legality of abortion.?

Bishop Nickless ends by encouraging ?everyone who is eligible to vote, if you have not already done so by an early or absentee ballot, to vote according to a well-formed and devout Catholic conscience ??

His message ultimately isn?t very helpful. I mean, how is one to vote? There is no abortion initiative or referendum on the Iowa ballot, so Bishop Nickless must be directing voters? attention to candidates, but are there any candidates in Iowa who do not condone legal abortion? Certainly both of the major presidential candidates support abortion under some circumstances. Maybe one of the third party presidential candidates is absolutely opposed to abortion in all circumstances. Are there candidates in state races that could meet this measure? Missouri has Todd Akin and Indiana has Richard Mourdock, both are Republican senatorial candidates. Does Iowa have someone of the Akin-Mourdock ilk?

If Sioux City Catholics are going to avoid serious sin, Bishop Nickless may have to get more specific.

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Links:
[1] http://www.scdiocese.org/about.cfm?subpage=1300268
[2] http://www.scdiocese.org/about.cfm?subpage=1418097