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Palin criticized for mocking community organizing

by NCR Staff

The group Catholic Democrats today issued a strong rebuke of Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin's sarcastic mocking of Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's work as a community organizer during the 1980s.

"I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a community organizer, except that you have actual responsibilities," Palin, former mayor of a small town in Alaska, said during her speech to the Republican National Convention Sept. 3 in St. Paul, Minn.

The speech by Palin, currently governor of Alaska, followed one by former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who also belittled Obama's work as a community organizer, drawing laughs from the assembled Republicans.

"It is shocking that a vice presidential candidate would disparage an essential component of the Catholic social tradition with her condescending attack on urban community organizing," said Dr. Patrick Whelan, president of Catholic Democrats, an association of state-based groups advancing understanding of Catholic social teaching.

The group criticized Palin for mocking Obama's work "in the 1980s for the Catholic Campaign for Human Development." The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is an arm of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and it partially funded Obama's activities in Catholic parishes on the South Side of Chicago. At the time it was known simply as the Campaign for Human Development.

Community organizing was work Obama undertook "instead of pursuing a lucrative career on Wall Street," according to a statement from Catholic Democrats.

Referring to Palin's speech, the statement said: "Her divisive rhetoric, repeatedly pitting small towns

against urban communities, demonstrates not only a lack of charity toward the needs of some of the least among us but a fundamental disrespect for those who dedicate their lives to overcoming poverty across our country.?

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