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Mark Silk on the God Gap

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Distinctly Catholic

Mark Silk examines the reasons for the re-emergence of the "God gap" in our elections.

This will, I am sure, become a central concern in the post-mortems and rightly so. There is only one thing I want to point out at this time. The issue is not just whether or not the White House or the DNC does adequate faith-outreach. The question is: Does it make a difference? It doesn't do any good to have the President invite Catholic bishops into the Oval Office when they are in Washington as Bush formerly did - unless he is going to actually listen to what they have to say. Key players in this White House, such as domestic policy adviser Melody Barnes, think they understand the God gap but they don't. Barnes kept her fingers in faith-outreach when she worked at the Center for American Progress but that organization only knows how to preach to the choir. Newsflash: Rev. Jim Wallis is a gret guy but he is not a swing voter.

The one thing that the White House can - and must - do is recapture the religious cadences and language that charcterized then-candidate Obama's speeches in 2008. That language got buried under the policy wonk gibberish in the health care debate. Even the other day at his post-election press conference, the President talked about the "family" that can now keep their college age children on their health care and the "young girl" with a pre-existing condition who can now get insurance. Mr. President. These people have names. They have faces. Can you introduce the nation to them? Can you put a name and a face on the problems you discuss? Check back in the Book of Genesis to see how important naming is.

Also, look for the White House to be very defensive on this - already they have replied to Silk's post. Guys. Relax. The issue is not recriminations. The issue is fixing the problem.

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