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## Gerson on Catholics & Republicans

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Michael Gerson was one of the champions of the "compassionate conservatism" that George W. Bush ran on in 2000 and, as a Post columnist, Gerson continues to give voice to a morally serious understanding of politics. It is curious that this non-Catholic seems more interested in the Catholic intellectual tradition than many Catholic politicians!

Today, he has an interesting essay that echoes some of the issues I have raised in these pages, specifically, how the libertarian instincts of some in the GOP base is at cross purposes with Catholic social teachings. Gerson is right to instruct his Republican friends to consult the Catholic tradition and to allow it to serve as a check on some of the Tea Party hyper-individualism. Gerson is also correct in his admonition to some Democrats to allow the Catholic intellectual tradition to put a check on their, very different, hyper-individualism. Alas, I suspect that at the national level, political orthodoxies will continue to trump religious orthodoxies.

It is interesting that Gerson also sees the Catholic intellectual tradition as yielding the kind of moderate, centrist politics for which so many people yearn but which seems unable to find a means to effective political expression given the current partisan configuration. Back in the last years of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century, the Catholic political party in Germany was known as the Center Party. But, there is no prospect of a Catholic political party emerging today, even if it might give voice to the kind of political moderation the country needs.

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