

Cardinal: Obama agenda 'apocalyptic'

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WASHINGTON -- A U.S. cardinal who has worked at the Vatican for 12 years harshly criticized President-elect Barack Obama Nov. 13, saying he has "an agenda and vision that are aggressive, disruptive and apocalyptic."

Cardinal J. Francis Stafford, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, a major Vatican tribunal, spoke on "Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II: Being True in Body and Soul" in a lecture sponsored by the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

Saying that the United States experienced a "cultural earthquake" when Obama was elected president Nov. 4, Stafford said the president-elect "appears to be a relaxed, smiling man" with rhetorical skills that are "very highly developed."

"But under all that grace and charm, there is a tautness of will, a state of constant alertness, to attack and resist any external influence that might affect his will," he added.

Stafford quoted liberally from Obama's July 17, 2007, address to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, in which Obama affirmed his support for *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized most abortions, and said, "On this issue I will not yield."

Obama also said in the 2007 talk that he would not want his daughters to be "punished by a pregnancy."

"Punished by a pregnancy," Stafford repeated. "Catholics weep at these words. ... What should we do with our hot, angry tears of betrayal?"

The cardinal compared the upcoming years of the Obama administration to Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

"For the next few years, Gethsemane will not be marginal," he said. "We will know that garden."

Although the text of Cardinal Stafford's talk was not made public, a video clip from it was posted on YouTube by The Tower, the student newspaper at Catholic University.

The Tower also reported that Stafford spoke about "Humanae Vitae," Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical on human life, and said Catholics need to return to the original values of marriage and human dignity.

"If 1968 was the year of America's 'suicide attempt,' 2008 is the year of America's exhaustion," he said. "In the intervening 40 years since 'Humanae Vitae,' the United States has been thrown upon ruins."

Cardinal Stafford, 76, was bishop of Memphis, Tenn., 1983-86, and archbishop of Denver, 1986-96, until he was called to the Vatican by Pope John Paul II in 1996 to serve as president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. He was named a cardinal in 1998.

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