

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

August 15, 2011 at 8:45am

Ornstein on Obama & Truman

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Distinctly Catholic

Norm Ornstein has a very smart article at TNR comparing President Obama's re-election predicament - running during tough economic times with an ideologically driven and recalcitrant Congress - to that faced by Harry Truman in 1948. Ornstein's makes some of the same arguments I have been making for months, especially the fact that Obama needs to be a little less willing to find Common Ground and a little more willing to draw distinctions. And, as Ornstein points out, Truman faced Democratic opponents - in the general election - to his left (Henry Wallace) and his right (Strom Thurmond). But, Truman had two things that saved his presidency. First, he had pluck. He was a scrapper. Obama does his best when his back is against the wall, but he needs to show a little bit more fight and a little less professorial detachment, actually a lot less professorial detachment. Second, Truman was the only twentieth century president to lack a college degree but he was, arguably, the most well prepared president because he was deeply read in history. He had a wisdom that was uncanny and canny. Obama should listen a little less to his economic prognosticators and spend a little more time consulting history, and he should start with the biographies of, and auto-biography by, Harry S. Truman.

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