

Abp Chaput Steps Over the Line (Again!)

Michael Sean Winters | Nov. 19, 2012 Distinctly Catholic

Every time I get close to thinking I could find my way to actually liking Archbishop Charles Chaput, he goes and says something so outrageous, I find myself pushed back into a posture of deep suspicion or worse.

During the election season, Archbishop Chaput was relatively restrained. When he preached the closing Mass at the "Fortnight for Freedom," his sermon was infinitely better than the sermon by Archbishop William Lori that opened the Fortnight. The statement from the Pennsylvania Conference of Catholic Bishops issued in the autumn was mostly balanced and free from tendentiousness.

Now, [in a speech accepting the Meese Award](#) [1], Archbishop Chaput had this to say:

I've been thinking for the past week about the simplicity, dignity and good will of Governor Romney's Election Night concession speech. And I've compared those qualities with the vulgarity, vindictiveness and deceit of the campaign that defeated him. Somewhere between the President's calls for civility in public life last year and the actions of his supporters in re-electing him, we crossed over into a different and lower kind of America.

Now, as I recall, the President also gave a speech on election night that was characterized by "simplicity, dignity and good will." But, more to the point, I also remember a campaign by Governor Romney that had its fair share of "vulgarity, vindictiveness and deceit." I suppose His Grace missed the Romney campaign ad that falsely suggested President Obama had gutted welfare reform, an ad that not only was false, but contained the ugly dog whistle of Republican politics, appealing to the base, racist instincts of their base regarding welfare recipients. (And, last time I checked, racism is an intrinsic evil.) Did His Grace miss the ad that falsely suggested Jeep was going to be off-shoring Ohio jobs to China, an ad that was publicly contradicted by the company in question? I am sure that His Grace must not have seen the Republican Convention at which Clint Eastwood indulged his own vulgarities on the stage. And, of course, His Grace must not have heard about the video in which Mr. Romney dismissed 47% of the American people as moochers.

There were some claims made by President Obama and his campaign staff that were deceitful, vindictive and vulgar to be sure. But, it was not, as Chaput suggests, a one way street nor has it ever been in American politics. Nor, let it be said, has this or any recent campaign descended to the "lower kind of America" that the young nation witnessed in the 1800 campaign. Alas, as Archbishop Chaput has demonstrated time and again in recent years, his knowledge of the American founding is a bit skewed towards the American triumphalism of his pals George Weigel and Robbie George.

I want to like Archbishop Chaput. I really, really do. But, he is not making it very easy.

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[1] <http://catholicphilly.com/2012/11/archbishop-chaput/homilies-speeches/fighting-the-good-fight-for-religious-freedom/>