

# **RUDY'S DON'T-ASK/DON'T TELL POLICY ON CATHOLICISM**

**By Don Feder**

**Posted August 16, 2007**

Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, leading in the polls for the Republican presidential nomination, has his own don't ask/don't tell policy – Don't ask him what kind of Catholic he is. If you do, he won't tell you.

Giuliani is in a classic bind. He can't talk about his religion – and he can't not talk about it.

Voters want a candidate who's religious. It doesn't much matter what that religion is (excepting, of course, something really weird, like Wicca or Islam).

For most voters, it doesn't matter if it's their religion. In 2004, Catholics were slightly more likely to vote for Methodist Bush than for the first major-party Catholic (I use the term loosely) nominee since John F. Kennedy, who – in the midst of the campaign – suddenly recalled that he'd once been an altar boy.

Americans are comforted by the thought that they are electing a man to lead the nation who believes in God and the 10 Commandments, attends religious services (not as a campaign photo-op), and at least publicly adheres to the tenets of his faith.

Rudy is none of the above. That's why, if asked about his Catholicism, he'll respond with the equivalent of “no comment.”

The mayor needs to maintain the fiction that he's a Catholic. At the same time, he needs to keep the discussion as far away as

possible from his actual relationship with the Catholic Church. This is getting harder and harder.

On the Iowa campaign trail, Hizzoner was asked whether he considered himself “a traditional, practicing Roman Catholic,” and to discuss the role his faith played in helping him make decisions on issues like abortion.

Rudy responded, “My religious affiliation, my religious practices and the degree to which I am a good or not so good Catholic, I prefer to leave to priests.”

The mayor cautioned that there should not be a “religious test for public office.” Silly me, I thought that when Article VI of the Constitution says “no religious test shall ever be required as a *qualification* to any office or public trust under the United States,” that meant an individual couldn’t be disqualified based on his religion, not that we’re not allowed to inquire about Rudy’s relationship to the faith he professes.

When asked to reconcile his pro-choice advocacy with his alleged Catholicism, Rudy has replied: “Issues like that are for me and my confessor.” (And who would that be, Father Guido Sarducci?) Also, “I’m a Catholic, and that’s the way I resolve those issues, personally and privately” – otherwise known as Rudy’s Catholic code of silence. Instead of consulting Church teachings, as a Catholic would do, Rudy believes questions of theology should be resolved personally and privately.

Still, Rudy claims he’s devout, in his own private/don’t-ask-me-to-explain way. “Religion is very important to me. It’s a very important part of my life.” The foregoing is to be taken at face value, without a request for elaboration.

Unfortunately for Giuliani, unlike the mainline Protestant churches (where the only membership requirement is having your dues paid up at the local country club), the Catholic Church has rules.

In a June 26 *Village Voice* article (“No Wafer for Rudy”), Wayne Barrett notes the mayor “can’t have a confessor. He can’t receive the sacraments of penance, the Eucharist, or marriage.” That’s because Giuliani divorced Donna Hanover, his wife of 18 years, without obtaining an annulment (for which he would not have qualified), and married his third wife, Judith Nathan, outside the Church.

If they did a TV series based on Giuliani’s private life, it would be called, “Desperate Mayors.”

His first marriage of 14 years to his second cousin, Regina Peruggi, was annulled. While he was still married to wife #2, the mother of his two children, he carried on openly with Nathan, who he paid \$10,000-a-month as his “speech writer” and marched with in New York’s annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade, a walk mayors traditionally take with their wives, not their mistresses

On Rudy’s campaign website, wives #1 and #2 are non-persons, like fallen members of the old Soviet Politburo airbrushed out of photographs. The site notes that he married Judith S. Nathan in May of 2003. There is no mention of any other marriages or of his children.

But this is typical of Rudy’s tendency to re-write history. Today, the mayor says “I hate abortion.... I would encourage someone not to take that option.” He’s also opposed to late-term abortions and Medicaid funding of abortion.

Still, unlike Mitt Romney, Giuliani isn't doing a 180-degree pirouette here, probably because he's seen the drubbing the former governor has taken for flip-flopping. Thus, while tacking right on the issue, the mayor still favors a woman's right to choose, with qualifications.

The decision on whether or not to kill her unborn child "ultimately, a woman should make that (*choice*) with her conscience and ultimately with her doctor," Giuliani explains. If this was the 1850s, Rudy would say that on the question of slavery, "Ultimately a plantation owner should make that decision in consultation with his conscience, and ultimately with his overseer."

Still, Rudy absolutely abhors abortion, and has a 10-point program for combating the evil (that pregnant women nevertheless should be free to choose), mostly by promoting adoption.

When he was mayor of what's often called the abortion capital of America, it was hard to find a politician – of either party – more pro-choice than Giuliani.

- When asked why the far-left New York State Liberal Party endorsed Rudy's 1989 mayoral campaign, the party chairman replied: "He agreed with the Liberal Party's views of affirmative action, gay rights, gun control, school prayer and tuition tax credits. As mayor, Rudy Giuliani would uphold the Constitutional and legal rights to abortion."
- Based on his answers to a candidate questionnaire, and/or his performance in office, Rudy received a 100% rating from the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) in his 1993, 1997 and 2000 campaigns.

- Gloria Feldt, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), recalls an appearance the mayor made before the group's New York chapter, where: "He spoke very eloquently about family planning (*abortion*). It's hard to be that eloquent if you're saying something you don't believe."
- He re-appointed PPFA President Pam Maraldo to the City's Board of Health, which oversees 11 municipal hospitals where an average of 6,500 abortions a year were performed during Rudy's tenure as mayor.
- Over the years, the Giuliani administration awarded a total of \$2 million to Planned Parenthood's New York branch.
- One of Rudy's human-resources commissioners notes her ex-boss continued Ed Koch's policy of allowing the city to pay for abortions, whether or not they met Medicaid's "medically necessary" requirement, and even if the woman's earnings were more than 85% above the limit for Medicaid eligibility. She describes Mayor Giuliani as "gung-ho abortion."
- The fact that, on social issues, they are identical twins separated by party, may explain Rudy's endorsement of Democratic Governor Mario Cuomo, the icon of New York liberals, when the latter ran for re-election. ("Our future, our destiny is not a matter of chance. It's a matter of choice. My choice is Mario Cuomo.") It's hard to say which choice is more tragic – abortion or endorsing Cuomo.
- According to a former aide, it took Mayor Giuliani exactly 15 minutes to decide that he supported partial-birth

abortions (“I’m fine with that!”), as he headed into a meeting with NARAL leaders. Now he opposes the procedure -- described by the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan (who represented New York in the U.S. Senate from 1983 to 2001) as “fourth-fifths infanticide” – another conversion of convenience. He also supports parental notification, which he formerly opposed. Flip. Flop.

In a wink-and-nod to pro-lifers, Rudy says he would appoint “strict constructionists” to the federal bench, including the Supreme Court.

As mayor, he appointed or re-appointed 127 municipal judges – none could reasonably be mistaken for Antonin Scalia.

One had been executive director of the homosexual Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. Another ruled that city funds could be used for sex-change operations for indigents. And a third allowed a lesbian to adopt her partner’s child. The judge, Paula Hepner, later married another woman in a Canadian ceremony.

In fairness to Da Mayor, abortion isn’t the only issue where Rudy is trying to re-invent himself. There’s nothing about gay rights on his website – such reticence from a man who marched in every gay-pride parade as mayor, and welcomed the Gay Olympics to New York City.

He does, however, firmly assert his belief (arrived at in consultation with his conscience, his confessor and his pollster) that marriage should be between a man and a woman – or, perhaps, several women.

As America’s mayor, he pushed a domestic-partnership bill (described as “as far-reaching as San Francisco’s”) through the city council and supported similar legislation before the New York

State legislature. The Archdiocese of New York blasted the former as “contrary to moral natural law.” Wonder what Rudy’s confessor thought about that one.

During the 2004 campaign, at least a dozen Catholic bishops announced that John Kerry could not receive communion in their dioceses, because of the Democratic nominee’s position on abortion. On those rare occasions when he attends Catholic services, Rudy tries to avoid embarrassment. According to a June 25 *New York Times* story, “Communion may be a moot point for Mr. Giuliani, who was seen leaving Mass at a church in Washington before the Eucharist.”

Still, for those Catholic prelates who’ve spoken out, the question of whether Rudy is a “good or not so good Catholic,” has been settled.

Newark Archbishop John Myers says the mayor is “being illogical” with his I’m-personally-opposed-but-can’t-impose-my-morality stand on abortion. “To violate human life is always and everywhere wrong,” the Archbishop declares.

Providence, R.I. Bishop Thomas J. Tobin is even more outspoken: “Rudy’s public proclamations on abortion are pathetic and confusing. Even worse, they’re hypocritical.” Tobin asks “if any politician could get away with the same pathetic (*personally opposed but*) cop-out” on any other moral question – say racism, sexual abuse, incest, prostitution or polygamy?

In May, speaking of Mexican legislators who voted to legalize abortion, Pope Benedict XVI said they had, in effect, excommunicated themselves. A Vatican spokesman quickly qualified the pope’s comments, but the feeling in Rome could hardly be stronger.

The worst hypocrisy would be for Rudy Giuliani to receive the nomination of the party that's been proudly and officially pro-life since 1980, the party that has won the presidency in five of seven elections since 1976 with the fervent support of the pro-life movement. According to the National Review's Ramesh Ponnuru, George W. Bush's pro-life position netted him 2.4 million votes in '04.

Rudy Giuliani doesn't even do a passable impersonation of a Catholic. His Church understands it. Practicing Catholics understand it. Republican primary voters must be made to understand it.

*A version of this commentary appeared on GrassTopsUS.com*