



# CATHOLICS UNITED

April 3, 2008

The Most Reverend Robert W. Finn  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph  
300 East 36th Street  
P.O. Box 419037  
Kansas City, Missouri 64141-6037

**Via U.S. Postal Service and Electronic Mail**

Your Excellency:

I write to express concern over your planned appearance at the National “Catholic” Prayer Breakfast (NCPB) in Washington, D.C. on April 18, 2008. This event is organized by operatives of the Republican Party and Republican-affiliated organizations, and has in the past been used as a platform for elected officials who are out of step with Church teaching on building a culture of life. Catholics United humbly asks that you use this occasion to honor the fullness of the Catholic faith by speaking prophetically for a responsible end to the war in Iraq, and by drawing a clear line between the Church and partisan politics.

Prayer breakfast president Joseph Cella is currently on leave as president of the organization Fidelis, whose political action committee gave exclusively to Republican candidates in 2006. Both Mr. Cella and NCPB vice president Austin Ruse now serve on the national steering committee of Catholics for McCain, and NCPB treasurer Leonard Leo heads Catholic outreach for the Republican National Committee. The remaining two NCPB board members have ties to partisan organizations such as the Christian Coalition and Family Research Council.

President Bush – who supports the death penalty and certain forms of torture, and who initiated the Iraq War against the pleas of Pope John Paul II and the U.S. Catholic Bishops – spoke at the NCPB in 2005, 2006, and 2007. The White House has publicized these appearances, and used them to shape media coverage suggesting that the president’s policies enjoy wide support within the Catholic community and Church institution. At the 2006 event, Mr. Ruse proudly referred to President Bush as “the second Catholic president.” Both President Bush and presumptive Republican presidential nominee John McCain are expected to attend this year’s event.

To help alter the perception that the National "Catholic" Prayer Breakfast represents unreserved Church sanction of the Republican agenda, Catholics United is asking that you use this opportunity to forcefully remind those in attendance that our faith cannot be subjected to partisan manipulation. You can achieve this by speaking clearly about the Catholic Church's opposition to the war in Iraq, our need to bring the war to a responsible end, and the intrinsic evil of torture.

Catholics United welcomes all civil and bipartisan efforts to advance the fullness of the Catholic faith. However, we are concerned that contributing to the appearance that our Church leadership backs certain Republican politicians – despite the fact that these politicians hold positions contrary to Church teaching – will result in confusion and public scandal.

If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss these matters in more detail please do not hesitate to contact me at [ckorzen@catholics-united.org](mailto:ckorzen@catholics-united.org) or at 207-221-2941.

Sincerely,

Chris Korzen  
Executive Director  
Catholics United