



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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### **Resignation of House of Representatives' Chaplain raises questions**

Why did Speaker Ryan ask for the resignation of the House Chaplain? Maybe there was a good reason, and maybe there was a bad reason.

The absence of an explanation (for something that has never been done before) fuels the suspicion that a bad reason was at play.

What might be a bad reason? To his credit, Speaker Ryan said that asking for the resignation was not because of any “wrongdoing” on the Chaplain’s part.

Some people suspect that it was because the Chaplain, in the prayers he led, reflected the impact of the Gospel on issues related to law-making and the common good, such as the new tax laws and the poor – too political, they say.

There are those who insist on a strict division between social issues and religion, Christians who are guided more by party politics than by faith, who resist the notion that the Gospel is meant to impact the concerns of daily living.

That has been a notion promoted also by previous administrations, interpreting the Constitution to mean freedom of worship, but not extending it to the exercise of religion outside of church, on Monday, in the affairs of daily living.

Jesus and his Catholic Church, on the other hand, while comfortable with separation of Church and State, insist on the social impact of the Gospel: a shared life of self-gift in service, especially of people who are poor, weak, sick, oppressed, and marginalized.

In fact, the Catholic Church has an extensive body of social teachings that attempt to translate the Gospel into daily living, and which is founded on the principles of respect for human life and dignity, and the common good – both/and, not either/or.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis, in his exhortation on holiness, *Rejoice and Be Glad*, warns against the error whereby people “find suspect the social engagement of others,” calling for defense of the unborn and of people in any need. He writes that “we cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice” (paragraph 101).

Hopefully *that’s* not the reason Speaker Ryan asked for the Chaplain’s resignation; that would be a bad reason.

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