

Bishop raps Giuliani on his abortion stand: Catholic Church opposes pro-choice politicians

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The Catholic bishop of Providence, Rhode Island, has publicly lambasted Republican Rudy Giuliani's support of abortion rights, adding his voice to a conservative chorus of critics rebuking the front-running GOP presidential candidate.

"Rudy's public proclamations on abortion are pathetic and confusing. Even worse, they're hypocritical," Bishop Thomas J. Tobin wrote in a May 31 editorial in his diocese's newspaper, *Rhode Island Catholic*.

Tobin's criticism comes as the Catholic Church—from Pope Benedict XVI on down—engages in a debate over how the church's hierarchy should treat Catholic politicians who support abortion rights.

Tobin said he was particularly "distressed" when he received an invitation to attend a fund-raiser for Giuliani. "I try to avoid partisan politics," Tobin wrote. "Heck, I'm not even a Republican. But most of all, I would never support a candidate who supports legalized abortion."

The former New York mayor's pro-abortion rights stance has been heavily criticized by conservatives—including Focus on the Family founder James Dobson—but Tobin is thought to be the first Catholic bishop to speak out against Giuliani.

In a speech at Houston Baptist College in May, Giuliani said: "I believe abortion is wrong. I think it is morally wrong." But he also said that when "people of good faith . . . come to different conclusions about this, about something so very, very personal, I believe you have to respect their viewpoint. You have to give them a level of choice here."

Also last month, Pope Benedict said that Mexican politicians who recently voted to legalize abortions could be excommunicated. The pontiff later backed off and said

church rules call for Catholics who participate in abortions to exclude themselves from receiving Holy Communion. Soon after, 18 Catholic members of the U.S. House of Representatives criticized the pope for overstepping church-state boundaries.

During the 2004 presidential race, nearly a dozen U.S. bishops said they would refuse to offer communion to Senator John Kerry (D., Mass.). -*Religion News Service*