

Leader of Nuns on the Bus calls GOP budget immoral

by [David Gibson](#) in the [October 3, 2012](#) issue

Sister Simone Campbell, who led the summertime Nuns on the Bus tour for social justice, called the GOP budget plan “immoral” in a spirited speech at the Democratic National Convention.

“Paul Ryan claims this budget reflects the principles of our shared faith,” Campbell said, as she took direct aim at Mitt Romney’s running mate, who has often cited his Catholic faith as the underpinning of his fiscal policies. “But the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated that the Ryan budget failed a basic moral test, because it would harm families living in poverty,” she said on September 5.

Ryan has argued that his budget plan is informed by Catholic social teaching and that reducing the federal deficit through budget cuts would help the poor and all Americans by allowing the economy to grow.

The bishops, with some notable exceptions, have countered that Ryan’s budget in fact violates Catholic social teaching by emphasizing cuts in programs for the needy while reducing taxes for the wealthy. Ryan’s plan has also been criticized as likely to expand rather than reduce the national debt.

By framing her critique in the context of her Christian faith, Campbell was using the kind of religious language that has been a hallmark of the GOP’s campaign to rally believers behind Romney and Ryan. But she also sought to identify the sisters and the Democratic agenda with Catholic tradition at a time when Catholic voters—who constitute close to one-quarter of the electorate—are considered key to the November election.

Just as important, Campbell neatly folded her remarks in with statements from the Catholic hierarchy, which has had more than its share of disagreements with President Obama and the Democratic Party over issues like gay marriage and abortion.

“We agree with our bishops, and that’s why we went on the road: to stand with struggling families and to lift up our Catholic sisters who serve them,” said Campbell, who heads a Washington-based Catholic social justice lobby called Network. “Their work to alleviate suffering would be seriously harmed by the Romney-Ryan budget.”

In her seven-minute speech Campbell did not address hot-button issues like abortion directly, but she earned her loudest ovation when she defended Obama’s health-care reform law as a cause she considers “part of my pro-life stance and the right thing to do.”

Like many other speakers at the convention in Charlotte, Campbell framed the election as a choice between a philosophy of individualism championed by Republicans and a more communitarian approach to society building emphasized by Democrats.

“During our journey, I rediscovered a few truths,” Campbell said. “First, Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan are correct when they say that each individual should be responsible. But their budget goes astray in not acknowledging that we are responsible not only for ourselves and our immediate families. Rather, our faith strongly affirms that we are all responsible for one another.” —RNS

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