

“family values.” He is a protégé of Milton Friedman at the Chicago School of Economics. He believes in the legalization of drugs for the “free market.” He was in Argentina recently, talking about privatizing pensions, social security, and infrastructure: the Conservative Revolution agenda. How can he say he’s for family values with that agenda?

Bishop Pilla: Because that’s what makes it work. “Buzz words” is right! Words turned inside out. That’s why people who support abortion say they’re “pro-choice.” They couch it in those terms to make it more acceptable, and people fall for rhetoric. In the U.S., when you talk about choice, this is a high value. Talk about individualism—high value. See? And now, in the current climate, use the words “family values,” and it makes it all acceptable.

You have to listen to what is being said. Are these really family values, or something we would normally reject, couched in a way to make it more acceptable? It’s packaging, it’s the modern media, it’s spin control. It’s clever, but you’ve got to be careful. Then, they won’t get away with it.

Fidelio: Could he use the institutions of the Catholic Church to become an American spokesman for these things?

Bishop Pilla: The Bishops Conference speaks for the Bishops; nobody else.

Fidelio: The title of the 1996 National Lay Forum is, “Crossing the Threshold with Hope.”

Bishop Pilla: And these are real issues that you bring up. They are complex, and, in the course of one interview, we certainly can’t resolve all these things. I keep going back to who we are: I am at peace and I have confidence, not because I have all the answers, but because I trust in a good and loving God, made so clear to me in the life of Jesus Christ; and He said, that victory is assured for those who believe and persevere, and I take that at its word. So, for me, the suffering isn’t meaningless—it isn’t just pain, it’s redemptive. Somehow my continued efforts, despite failure, despite pain, are adding to that whole salvific effort—just as His was.

Fidelio: Thank you, Bishop Pilla.

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard,
Bishop of Albany, N.Y.

‘I’m emphasizing the sacredness of *all* aspects of human life’

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, who was born in Troy, N.Y. in 1938, was ordained to the priesthood in Rome, Italy in 1963 and became the ninth Roman Catholic Bishop of Albany, New York in 1977.

Soon after he became a priest, he co-founded the Hope House Drug Rehabilitation facility, which now, thirty years later, services eight thousand people yearly in residential, outpatient, community, and school-based programs.

When capital punishment was reinstated in New York State in 1994, the Bishop helped organize “New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty” and he now serves as its president. He is active in many other civic projects, and is the president of the Urban League of Albany.

Bishop Hubbard is the chairman of the Public Policy Committee of the N.Y. Catholic Conference and, among his national responsibilities, serves on the Social Policy and World Peace Committee of the U.S. Catholic Conference and the Committee on the Laity of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

This interview was conducted for Fidelio by Nina Ogden on Oct. 12, in Cleveland, Ohio at the National Lay Forum sponsored by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Fidelio: Bishop Hubbard, you addressed an executive session of the U.S. Bishops Conference last fall, to raise your concerns about the organization called the Catholic Alliance, which was started by the Christian Coalition. Why did you raise this issue?

Bishop Hubbard: I received literature from them right following our Holy Father left the U.S. after his trip here last October. I found much of this literature extremely disturbing, especially the partisan tone and the blatant untruths of the Alliance’s Congressional

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scorecard. I was also disturbed by the intentional manipulation in the literature, which implied that the Alliance spoke for the Holy Father and was officially “Catholic.” The organization stated its purpose as representing the Catholic community before the Congress, state legislatures, and local political bodies, and I thought that would sow great confusion among those bodies. I was also concerned about the confusion created among the Catholic faithful, who would somehow think that this material could represent the social doctrine of the Church. The Bishops Conference had published a very carefully thought out statement on political responsibility (“Political Responsibility, Proclaiming the Gospel of Life, Protecting the Least Among Us, and Pursuing the Common Good”). Our statement cuts across political and ideological lines. Its strongest characteristic is its consistent advocacy for the dignity and sacredness of all human life, at every stage of human life. The material I received was absolutely at variance with that statement.



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munication with our Bishops Conference or any of its representatives. In these days of ecumenical dialogue, I was

grass roots efforts on public policy issues. In New York State, we have developed public policy education networks in each diocese, reaching into local parishes. But I worry that the activ-

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offended by this unilateral initiative, and saw it as an effort to split Catholics from their bishops, who are the official teachers of the Church. I think there

ity of the Catholic Alliance may militate against these kinds of grass roots efforts.

Fidelio: Where do the differences lie?

Bishop Hubbard: Well, if we compare agendas, one might think we agree on the subject of abortion. But we absolutely disagree on most of the issues of life, such as the question of the death penalty, which the Bishops oppose. The other major issues which they take a strong stand on, after abortion, seem to be a balanced budget amendment, term limits, malpractice reform; these kinds of things, which we take no stand on. But issues we take a strong position on, like legislation to protect poor children and immigrants, are certainly not on the Coalition’s agenda.

should be truth in advertising.

I was also concerned about IRS questions. We have 501C3 tax status, and can’t be involved in supporting specific candidates, while they have 501C4 status and say that they desire to form a so-called Catholic-Christian voting bloc. *But they are on a collision course with the approach we emphasized in our political responsibility statement.*

Fidelio: Do you think the material disseminated by the Catholic Alliance contributed to the attacks on the poor and vulnerable in the most recent period?

Bishop Hubbard: I’m very concerned about that process. This is not a hypothetical question. When I spoke on this matter to the Bishops Conference, I said that it appeared that the Christian Coalition had already turned the tide in Congress on the child-exclusion and family-cap provisions in the welfare reform legislation. Our Conference vigorously opposed these exclusions. And since that time, obviously, much of this kind of legislation has been consolidated.

Fidelio: Did you bring this up after the Catholic Alliance had established a separate board of directors?

Bishop Hubbard: Yes, afterwards, but they are still a fully-owned subsidiary of the Christian Coalition. I was concerned that a supposedly separate, so-called “Catholic” organization, would undermine our attempt to invoke a unified social-moral ethic in defense of the dignity and sacredness of every facet and stage of human life. When this organization was set up and called a “Catholic Alliance,” they had absolutely no com-

Fidelio: In the 1994 election, in the area where I live in Northern Virginia, many people were outraged to find, in the diocesan newspaper, the Christian Coalition voters’ guide endorsing specific candidates and issues. And, of course, since the Coalition’s flagship candidate in Virginia was Oliver North, whom the Christian Coalition was supporting for the U.S. Senate and whom we had exposed as a drug runner near the top of the Iran-Contra hierarchy, people were even more upset.

Bishop Hubbard: We will not allow the parishes to distribute Christian Coalition or Catholic Alliance material in our diocese. The parishes plan to distribute the Bishops statement on political responsibility in preparation for the presidential election. We have our own

Fidelio: What are you doing to counter this destruction?

Bishop Hubbard: This month is designated “Respect for Life” month, and what I am doing as a bishop is emphasizing the sacredness of all aspects of human life. I have asked every pastor to preach on this. The kinds of programs we are talking about in this conference on the Third Millennium, will be based on the hope of reconciliation and justice. We must be the advocates for the poor and helpless—for those who have no voice. We must evangelize through these years, to turn away from a culture of death and become a culture of life.