

**Statement by Raymond L. Flynn, National President of American Catholic Alliance, former United States Ambassador to the Vatican and Mayor of Boston**

Thank you for inviting me here today, I can't imagine either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party welcoming me to speak to their party leaders. In fact, even the popular Democratic Governor of Pennsylvania, Bob Casey, (my personal friend) was not allowed to address the Democratic National Convention because he was pro-life. I've seen no welcome mat by the Republican Party for the so-called Reagan-Democrats either. Even a quick look at the political objectives of the American First Party will surprisingly demonstrate an agenda, which many of my neighbors and former constituents, can relate to. One that I don't even think requires me to convince you. So, the real challenge ahead for you is to reach out to a much wider audience than the one you have presently. The American First Party, to be taken seriously, must be perceived as a viable political party. Unfortunately, that means you must prove that you can win elections. Just being right on the issues is not enough.

Most people won't vote if they don't think it will make a difference. In fact, I recently served on a White House Commission to interview candidates for White House Fellows. One of the distinguished applicants, when asked why so few people vote, told us of a new Harvard-JFK School of Government poll that revealed the two major reasons why young people don't vote are 1.) The political system and all politicians are corrupt. 2.) My vote is not going to make any differences. Regarding the first point, most politicians are not corrupt, but I do agree that the political system is corrupt. On the second point, how can people say their vote doesn't mean anything after the 2000 Florida presidential election?

Now we will have plenty of time during the question and answer segment to talk about local, state and national issues as well as the political and economic challenges that lie ahead. Today, I would like to address what I believe is an even greater crisis than the political and economic ones that we are presently experiencing. I bring this message directly to you because I know you are concerned people who really care about our country.

You are the people that President Kennedy was talking about when he said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country”.

In my opinion, the concern I have is critical for the moral stability for our country. And it’s not about politics or elections either.

My deep concern is too much power in the hands of so few people in this nation. Whether it’s big corporations, media tycoons, sports executives, Wall Street or Hollywood. They control and exercise enormous influence and power and its growing everyday. A few people having a monopoly on what gets printed, what gets on the air, the products you buy and the movies you watch. I can list specific examples of this concern. But let me first focus on an institution that is very important to many of us. Tragically through it has been dragged through the mud by the media, while other institutions either actively contributed or sat on their hands. I am obviously talking about the Catholic Church clergy sex-abuse scandal. Certainly, all decent people found the behavior of unfaithful priests despicable. But was it necessary to portray the entire priesthood and the Church in the manner in which most of the media did? They never had very good things to say about the Church before, and they jumped at the chance to bring this sacred institution and its leaders to its knees. Sexual abuse by priests is

criminal and should have been treated as a crime. Mandatory reporting to appropriate law enforcement authorities should not only have been the policy of the Church, but required under our criminal laws. But there are other critical issues relating to human sexuality that should and must generate a great deal of public attention. This continuing public debate and close media scrutiny will further contribute to the negative public image of the Church. All the polls show that the Church has taken a beating. As I said, this negative image problem has certainly made the church vulnerable. And here is the problem; traditional Catholics are concerned that the hierarchy of the Church will be forced to bow to pressure from liberal activists and the media. And it is this kind of influence and intimidation that I am talking about. Whether it is in Boston or the largest diocese in the U.S., Los Angeles, you can already feel the pressure mounting. Some people don't believe that traditional lay Catholics are well organized or even if they have had the courage to take on the fight.

When I finish this speech, I hope you will agree with what I've described to you, that this crisis is not confined to the Catholic Church. What I am talking about is a clear and present danger to our country and our way of life. Too much power, money and influence in the hands of so few in this country.

Already some in the Boston media as well as liberal activists are not only trying to handicap who the next Archbishop of Boston will be, but they are also hard at work laying out an agenda for sweeping changes and reforms in the Church that they want the next archbishop to agree to. The next spiritual leader in Boston must be a reformer demands one group. Meaning, I assume, the ordination of women, homosexual priests, and changing the celibacy rule to allow priests to marry. Catholics for Free Choice even

want the Church to change its position in opposition to abortion. Some have recommended that a lay board should determine who the next Archbishop of Boston should be.

We must make the Church modern, says others, one that reflects our present culture. Even some progressive members of the clergy are publicly advocating changes, some even inconsistent with Church doctrine and teaching. It seems everyone has an opinion on what the Church should do, that is of course, except traditional Catholics. They are the silent majority in the Church. You only see them every weekend at Mass, making their contributions, supporting the poor, elderly and educating of our children, many of whom are not even Catholic. The media or even the bishops never ask their opinion on anything. They just play by the rules and work hard to be loyal to the Church. If people are honest with you they will tell you, that when it comes to the Catholic Church, the only thing the media reports on are negative stories. What people need to understand is that this is not just the media disagreeing with the Church, that's their right? But why do our opinions get ignored? Boston Globe reporters don't call traditional Catholics for comments, because they don't agree with what we have to say. Our opinions do not conform to the story they want to write. Clearly, they are not looking for balance.

Admittedly, many people have turned against the church because of the sex-abuse scandal. Politicians can now openly support anti-family legislative proposals and there is no strong moral voice to call them on it. They will pay no political price. They vote the way the cultural elite wants them to.

So do traditional Catholics continue to sit on the political sidelines and be silent? Do they continue to allow the media and liberal activists, many of whom are opposed to church teachings, put pressure on church officials, forcing them to cave into their political agenda? Well this is already happening, whether you want to acknowledge it or not.

Getting back to my original point. The media and major corporation's now run much of government. Do we now want them to dictate the policies of the Catholic Church, or any other religion for that matter? Whatever happened to freedom of religion? Does that only mean freedom of religion when the powerful and influential agree with its policies? But when they don't like what the religion stands for, they merely try and change the rules!

I have a novel idea; let's allow people who are elected to make policy. The media can report the news and be as critical as they choose. And our religious leaders are free to remind us of what the moral rules are. And another key suggestion, keep big corporations and union money out of campaigns and elections. Let's also limit the number of TV, radio stations, magazines and newspapers that can be owned by a small number of people. They now dominate the flow of information, which a healthy society needs.

Whether you are Catholic or not, this is an issue that affects all of us. Have the courage to stand up and speak out. A handful of people own the media. They also own big business. They control and manipulate politicians from our two major parties. Don't let them now try and dictate Church doctrine. The hierarchy of the Church should remove corrupt and unfaithful priests. They must be free and not afraid to tell us what is

morally right and wrong. They should not be forced or intimidated in doing what is politically correct in the opinion of the cultural elite. Clearly, the church hierarchy must listen to traditional Catholics and faithful priests to ensure that these officials are not forced to compromise and change our Church's traditional values and beliefs.

In closing, let me say, "We are fortunate to live in this great country. God has given many of us a wonderful family. Most of us believe in God and personally speaking, I love my Catholic faith. So we have a lot to be thankful for. But like everything else, you have to work hard for what you believe in. And therein lie the problem and the challenge. We need a lot more good people involved in the affairs of our government. And it starts with winning elections.

