

# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Three big cheers for common sense

Chalk one up for freedom. A small victory, perhaps, but important. Justice Antonin Scalia has apologized to an Associated Press reporter whose voice recorder was seized and erased by a U.S. marshal on Mr. Scalia's protection detail during a public appearance. The justice says he's sorry, and it won't happen again. He said he will permit print reporters to record his remarks in the future, understanding that many of them depend on their recordings for accuracy.

Wow. Decency and common sense prevail. The spectacle of a marshal grabbing reporters' recorders in front of God and the entire audience, even as the justice spoke to a high school crowd in Mississippi, is unreal. This is America, after all. Land of the free. Home of free speech. A place where everyone is presumed innocent until proven guilty. A country, in fact, where federal law forbids agents from seizing reporters' notes, film and gear on a whim.

What happened, apparently, was that the justice had it announced at an earlier speech that it was his policy not to allow recordings of his talks. He also bans television cameras and video recorders. None of that is unusual. Any speaker has the right to set conditions before he opens his mouth. People don't have to stay. Reporters don't have to cover the speech.

But at the high school, no one mentioned the rule. The two reporters recording the speech had no idea they might offend the justice. They were, in fact, sitting right in front of him, in plain view of the speaker and the entire audience.

That's when the deputy marshal moved in and started grabbing their gear. A newspaper reporter gave up her tape and got it back only after erasing it. The AP reporter refused to give her digital recorder up, so the marshal grabbed it, demanding "the tape."

The deputy apparently didn't understand that digital recorders don't have tape, but the wire service reporter eventually showed her how to erase the memory.

The justice, ironically, was talking about the U.S. Constitution and the rights we enjoy under it.

One of those is supposed to be due process under law. Police and federal agents are not supposed to take the law into their own hands.

Usually, a high official caught in this kind of trap just bulls his or her way through. It's unheard of for someone to apologize for this kind of mistake.

Maybe the justice realized that bad publicity might harm his chances of being promoted to chief justice. Maybe he realized that he had made a mistake.

Maybe he just thought an apology — and a change of heart — was the right thing to do.

That would be sort of novel in Washington, but it could happen. Whatever the case, Mr. Scalia did the right thing and we all are better off for it.

It shows that if you believe in justice and the Constitution, things might just work out.

Hooray for common sense!

By Steve Haynes  
Nor'West Newspapers

Comments from our readers are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail [td@nwkansas.com](mailto:td@nwkansas.com). You may also fax your comments to (785) 462-7749 or drop them off at the office. Please remember that all submissions need a signature of the writer, a daytime telephone number and an address. Phone number and address are used for verification purposes only and are not included with your comment unless you request otherwise. Thanks for participating.

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### Why don't we pray for enemies?

*"But, I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." — Matthew 6:44.*

In church, we pray for those we love, those who are sick, our leaders, our families and ourselves. Why don't we ever pray for people who hate us, or people we dislike?

There's nothing wrong with praying for your aunt who has cancer or for our parents and grandparents who have died.

It's not a bad thing to pray for the president, governor and mayor. They need all the help they can get. The same goes for ministers, priests and other clergy.

Petitions for health and prosperity for ourselves may be a little self-seeking, but we were told to ask.

And there's certainly nothing wrong with asking for help when we have a big test, when our marriage is in trouble, when we have a problem we don't know how to solve or when we're sick or lonely or desperate.

These are all good things.

But why don't we pray for Osama bin Laden? Now there's a guy who needs more help than you,



#### Cynthia Haynes

##### ● Open Season

me or the entire U.S. Army can provide.

The same goes for Kim Chong-il, the leader of North Korea. He has an inferiority complex that would scare anyone.

He needs lots of help, and a little divine guidance wouldn't hurt.

These are the "bad guys." We don't like them because they have hurt and killed people. They hate us just because we exist. They're not "nice folks" and no one would want them to live in the neighborhood.

But that's not the point. We don't have to like them or what they do. Maybe we need to pray that they will change. We need to pray that they will stop hating and hurting both themselves and others.

The same thing goes for the little hurts, discomforts, annoyances and pains in life, too.

Next time you step on a piece of gum on the sidewalk, pray for the kid who spit it out.

Think nice thoughts, even if it kills you, about the people who mow their lawn at 6 a.m., allow their dog to do its job on your grass or steal your lawn ornaments.

Anger, hurt, resentment and hate don't seem to hurt anyone but the one who is angry, hurt, resentful or hateful.

The person who mows his lawn early just wants his grass to look nice, and he's an early bird. The kid with the gum and the dog owner are thoughtless, not malicious. And maybe the person who stole those lawn ornaments has a really ugly place they need to brighten up.

Just let go. Say, "I wish they hadn't done that, but that's OK," and get on with your life.

As for bin Laden and Kim Chong-il, give them a good, long prayer.

Boy, do they need it!

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Cynthia Haynes is co-owner of Nor'West Newspapers, which includes the Colby Free Press.

### It's called 'political manipulation'

#### Letters, Comments

##### ● Readership Speaks Out

To the Colby Free Press:

I appreciate your putting in the entire text of the article I mailed to you last week about Catholics voting responsibilities. I did not expect to see it in its entirety. Here is something else that I think is good. — **Joan Albers, Colby, letter #30**

This past Monday at the J.F. Kennedy School of Government, two of America's most visible and knowledgeable Catholic leaders, Fr. Brain Hehir and the Hon. Ray Flynn engaged in a discussion with Catholic students and faculty about key issues and challenges facing society and the Church today. The event was hosted by the Harvard Catholic Students Association.

Flynn, president of Your Catholic Voice, is the former U.S. ambassador to the Vatican and mayor of Boston and Rev. J. Brian Hehir is the former head of Harvard Divinity School and president of Catholic Charities for the Archdiocese of Boston.

Fr. Hehir talked mostly about the Catholic Church's just war theory and discussed in which cases military force is justified.

Here is a summary of Ambassador Flynn's remarks to the Catholic students.

Young Catholics are not only the future of the Church but will be the moral and political backbone of our society. They are answering Pope John II's call for faithful citizenship by getting involved in the civic life of their community. Church leaders should not only encourage but actively support these dedicated and loyal Catholics who want to make a positive contribution to our church and nation. They are responding to the Pope's message that "man can not be separated from God, nor politics from morality."

I am often asked, "Ambassador Flynn, you have been a successful elected official in Boston for many years and you have also been actively involved in U.S. Presidential elections,

should Catholics vote Republican or Democrat? What should Catholic political ideology be?"

Our Catholic faith does not easily fit either the "left" or "right", and nor does it fit into the plat-forms of either party. Our values are often not 'politically correct.' As lay Catholics our responsibility is to evaluate all the candidates, policies, parties, and platforms by how they protect or undermine the life, dignity, and rights of the human person, whether they protect the poor and vulnerable and whether they advance the common good.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops stated, "In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation. All believers are called to faithful citizenship, to become informed, active, and responsible participants in the political process."

Directly stated, neither political party nor Catholic leaders on the left or right speak for the vast majority of Catholics. The messages from Catholic social teachings are clear, but we have too many wrong message carriers today. Conservative Republicans no more speak for faithful Catholics any more than liberal Democrats do.

Going into the U.S. Presidential election, the political pundits will tell us that the question should be, "Are you better off than four years ago?" Wrong question. It should be, how can we pursue greater peace and justice? How can we protect and promote human life and dignity?

How can we — all of us, especially the weak and vulnerable — be better off in the years ahead? Our faith tells us that there must be a seat at the table for everyone. Are we determined to combat discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, disabling condition or age?

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in its recent document, <http://www.yourcatholicvoice.org/index.php?id=article&article=416> "Faithful Citizenship, a Catholic Call to Political Responsibility," thoroughly lays out a clear agenda for Catholics to follow in this election year. As Catholics, who we vote for and our policy choices are all matters of conscience, but as Catholic citizens and residents of the United States, we have the duty to participate now and in future debates and choices over the values and visions that will guide our nation.

The dual calling of faith and citizenship is at the heart of what it means to be a Catholic in the United States. Faithful citizenship calls us to seek "a place at the table" of life for all God's children in the elections of 2004 and beyond. This is what our Catholic Church teaches and these positions are not based on polls, focus groups or what is politically correct. It comes from the Good News of God and the teachings are not subject to political manipulation.

**Important note:** The views expressed in this and other columns on Catholics and Voting are those of the writer(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Colby Free Press. This page is an open invitation for any reader's opinion on this current controversy or any other issue, for that matter. It allows our readership to become involved in the dialogue of today. Comments on this newspaper's editorial stands, its columns, and columns of guest writers and letter writers are all fair game. A healthy community is a community that speaks out. Speak out. — Tom (TD) Dreiling, publisher, [td@nwkansas.com](mailto:td@nwkansas.com).

#### Doonesbury

##### ● Gary Trudeau

