

Has the Vatican Just Crossed a Prophetic Line With Pope Leo XIV?

Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois has long positioned himself as a Catholic while simultaneously advancing policies that run contrary to Church teaching. His voting record includes support for legalized abortion, advocacy for same-sex marriage, and the probing of Catholic judicial nominees on their faith. As the Catholic League pointed out in a letter to Durbin, “Your support for same-sex marriage, and your probing of the religious convictions of Catholic nominees for the federal bench, have also elicited much criticism.”

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The decision by Cardinal Blase Cupich to honor Durbin with a “lifetime achievement award” provoked widespread outrage from Catholics and other conservatives who saw the move as scandalous. Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, called the award “a source of scandal,” while Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois, urged Cupich to withdraw it or for Durbin himself to decline.

The Catholic League’s Pressure Campaign

The Catholic League chose not to focus on Cupich, but directly on Durbin himself. Bill Donohue, the group’s president, wrote to the senator on Sept. 23, warning that the award had “created a firestorm in the Catholic community, involving both the clergy and the laity.” Donohue urged Durbin to “put the interests of the Catholic community above your own interests.”



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When Durbin initially refused, the Catholic League mobilized its supporters, publishing the email address of his chief of staff and encouraging them to press the senator to back down. Within days, Durbin yielded. "Such a sweet victory," Donohue wrote. The Catholic League commended the senator for ultimately declining the award.

Pope Leo XIV's Troubling Response

While U.S. bishops and Catholic lay groups condemned Cupich's plan, Pope Leo XIV appeared hesitant. When asked about the controversy, he said, "I am not terribly familiar with the particular case. I think it's important to look at the overall work that a senator has done during, if I'm not mistaken, in 40 years of service in the United States Senate."

The pope then compared abortion to other issues, stating, "Someone who says I'm against abortion but is in favor of the death penalty is not really pro-life. Someone who says I'm against abortion but I'm in agreement with the inhuman treatment of immigrants in the United States, I don't know if that's pro life."

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His words sparked backlash, not only from Catholic leaders but also from conservatives across the political and religious spectrum. Many questioned how the leader of the Catholic Church, who has professed to be pro-life, could place abortion alongside other social concerns in a way that seemed to dilute the urgency of defending unborn life.

Prophecy and Discernment in Our Times

For many, this moment calls to mind a sobering prophecy given in 1954 by Pentecostal revivalist William Branham. He warned of a day when “the new pope is brought out of the United States and put over there according to prophecy, then they’ll form an image like unto the beast.” Branham described a deceptive religious power, cloaked in peace, that would lead many astray.

In another message, Branham cautioned that “the real, true believers out of Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Nazarene, Pilgrim Holiness, whatever they’ll be, will go together, and cemented by the love of God, that’ll make the Body of the Lord Jesus... and agnostics and shallow-minded will be cast to one side; they’ll go right on into the confederation of churches.”

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Is Pope Leo’s seemingly compromised position, and the resulting backlash from conservatives not just within the Catholic Church but across American society, a sign that Branham’s prophecy may yet be fulfilled in our day?

A Call to Watchfulness

We cannot answer that question definitively, but as Christians we are commanded to be discerning. These are prophetic days, and we must examine events like this through the lens of Scripture. The Word of God warns us of deception in the last days, and we must guard ourselves by holding fast to the truth that life is sacred, marriage is God-ordained and faith must never be compromised for political convenience.

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