

>> Welcome to Uncommon Knowledge. I'm Peter Robinson. Since 1997 the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Denver Colorado, the most Reverend Charles J. Chaput grew up in Kansas, became a Franciscan in 1965 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1970. He holds degrees from St. Fidelis College Catholic University and Capuchin College. Archbishop Chaput is the author most recently of "Render Unto Caesar: Serving The Nation By Living Our Catholic Beliefs And Political Life. I have read it so far, twice. Archbishop Chaput, thank you for joining us.

>> Thank you.

>> Now when I have a guest who's mentioned in a front page article of the New York Times on the day of the taping, here we have an abortion issue again dividing catholic votes, theological dispute felt in the swing city the reporter David Kirk Patrick reports from Scranton, Pennsylvania. When I have a guest whose mentioned in the front page story in the New York Times, we started by talking about that article. Let me quote the Times article to you. "A struggle within the church over just how catholic voters should think about abortion is once again flaring up just as political partisans prepare an all-out battle for the votes of mass going Catholics. Bishops around the country scolded House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California for publically contradicting the church's teachings on abortion." What did speaker Pelosi say that warranted correction?

>> Well, she said that the church's teaching about abortion wasn't clear that present position of the church is one that became popular 50 years ago. I think she said it.

>> Yes.

>> And no one who knows the history of the churches understanding of abortion really would say anything like that, from the very earliest days in the immediate post apostolic writings of the Christian community. Abortion was condemned and it has been the constant teaching of the church through all the centuries that abortion as always, in all circumstances, wrong.

>> Alright. By the way did you notice the use, you read the—

>> I read the article.
[Simultaneous Talking]

>> On the airplane flying in from Denver. Did you notice the use of the words scolded? Bishops scolded—

>> Yes.

>> Did you scold her?

>> I don't know. Actually I wrote an article, a letter to the people of the archdiocese of Denver making sure that they didn't misunderstand the issue from what she said. She

spoke publically on Meet The Press and I thought it was important for us to say somethings so that people wouldn't be misled by what she said.

>> Alright.

>> You know scandal is a deep concern in the Christian community and that means leading someone to stumble and so when people who are Catholics say this is a catholic position, when it's not, is absolutely essential so this is—

>> She began I believe I can quote her exactly, she began her answer to Tom Brokaw on Meet The Press by saying, "As an ardent Catholic."

>> That's correct.

>> And then she misrepresented church teachings.

>> Yes.

>> Although, it means heartfelt she may well be heartfelt but she wasn't educated on this issue.

>> Alright. The Times' article also notes that the bishop of Scranton has forbidden Senator Joseph Biden from receiving communion in Scranton, which is the senator's hometown. Senator Biden's position on abortion and I'm quoting Senator Biden. "I'm prepared as a matter of faith to accept that life begins at conception but for me to impose that judgment on others is inappropriate in a pluralistic society." What's wrong with that position?

>> Well, we're always imposing opinions on people to, who don't necessary agree with us all law is an opinion being imposed on the broader community whether it's seatbelt laws or laws about speed limits. We are always telling people what to do so it seemed like the nature of the government is to develop laws that protect the safety of people and abortion, protecting unborn children from being aborted, is a safety issue and it seems it can't be kinds of inappropriate kinds stand the government.

>> Well what -- here's what I'd like to ask you to address. Senator Biden seems to be -- I won't even try to put words into his mouth. Here would be an argument that one hears over and over again.

>> Right.

>> The prolife teaching of the Catholic Church is a distinctively catholic teaching. And it should be biding upon catholics in their private lives because the Catholic Church is after all a voluntary society. If you're a catholic you ought to be willing to abide by the rules of the church but it's catholic. It doesn't have application to the wider society. Now how do you respond to that?

>> Oh, we don't respond even historically 35 years ago before Robert S. Wade [phonetic]. It was a common teaching of our country, through its laws, that abortion was inappropriate and illegal act because it was seen as something that was harmful to people. So for people to say that in this country, it was never a catholic country, it's not today, it's the common belief of most cultures that abortion is the taking of innocent life.

>> So you're drawing an extremely sharp line there and saying it is your responsibility to speak out on behalf of the unborn.

>> Not purely as a Catholic Bishop, Archbishop, but as a concerned American on a question of human rights. This is not a specifically catholic issue.

>> I would say it's not primarily a catholic issue. I think, the issue, the place where we stand on abortion is supported by our faith but it's a human rights issue from the church's perspective.

>> Alright. Let me return to the Times articles. Some Catholic's in Scranton intend to vote for the prochoice candidate in this Presidential election Senator Obama, explaining their position by I'm quoting the Times article here "repeating liberal arguments about church doctrine broader than abortion, I think that one of the teachings of God is to take care of the less fortunate". The Times quote at Scranton Catholic are saying.

>> Well what's wrong with that? The church is concerned about poverty, war. There's a large basket of concerns for the catholic church and why shouldn't catholic voters say well, I'll take those 2 out of 3, I cant find any candidate who supports them all.

>> Well they are all important. They are interesting, anyway it says or not would be inappropriate but some issues are more foundational than other issues and from the church's perspective the life issue is the foundational wonders. There's no way that we can care for the poor children unless they're children first, unless they're born and so even though the church is -- by practice and by theology committed to taking care of all the born and responding to all the needs that are articulated there, there is a foundational issue when it comes to abortion.

>> Alright. The Times discusses progressives and conservatives within the church. These are the terms that are used and it also reports that Senator John McCain, the prolife Republican candidate in this election of course, "met with Archbishops Charles J. Chaput of Denver, that would be you, shortly—

>> Right.

>> Before the Democratic convention. Archbishop Chaput has been an outspoken critic of Miss Pelosi and Mr. Biden." Does that make you a conservative?

>> I don't know, I don't know that I'm outspoken critic of either one of those two people, I simply spoke to the people of our church telling them that what they said was inaccurate and I guess I could be described as an outspoken critic of them but that wasn't the intention the, the intention was to make sure that the faith of the church is clearly understood by our people.

>> Alright. Segment 2. What Vatican II had brought? You spend time in this marvelous book *Render Unto Caesar* arguing that the second Vatican council which took place in the early 1960s—

>> Right.

>> Was one of the great graces of God to the Catholic Church in our time.

>> The primary grace of God to the Catholic Church in the 20th century.

>> Oh, alright, you firming it up. Let me -- here's from an article called *Party Faithful*, recent article by Peter Boyer on the *New Yorker Magazine*, he's just characterizing what happened. Let me just see if you agree with us one paragraph characterization. "The second Vatican council convened in Rome 1962. By the time the council concluded 4 years later, the church had erratically transformed understanding of itself. The progressive, there is that word again, the progressive wing of the church felt that Vatican II was a liberation and invoked its spirit in challenging the faiths core doctrines and theology. This contingent -- progressive contingent eventually came to dominate much of the institutional church holding sway particularly in the Catholic Academy." Broadly accurate?

>> I think broadly accurate except that I would say that the church came out of the second Vatican council deeply refreshed, not broadly new. We return to our sources. It was going back to the early stages of the church in the earliest stage -- days of the church of self understanding and to articulate that in the contemporary ways so that the people of our time could live the apostolic faith of the church in a contemporary way.

>> Alright, now you have, I offer defensive council paraphrasing you and you tightened it up, you strengthened that defense. Listen to a few statistics. Catholic seminarians in 1965, 49,000. By 2002, the most recent date for which I was able to find numbers Googling around on the internet, 2002 fewer than 5000 nuns in 1965; a 180,000. By 200,2 only 75,000 average age of 68. Students in parochial schools 1965, I'm using 1965 because that's the year of the council ends and—

>> Legitimate.

>> Right. Students in parochial schools in 1965, 4.5 million. Today, even though the population of Catholic's is much bigger only 2 million. You write in *Render Unto Caesar* that the greatest danger for American Catholics is undue assimilation into American life. The question would be why shouldn't American Catholics assimilate or what is to prevent

them from assimilating when the church after Vatican II collapsed from under their very feet?

>> Well I don't if I would say the church collapsed. We've had huge difficulties in the last 30 years of the church in the western world especially. There's no doubt about that. But, you know, as you mentioned those statistics about nuns and priests and seminarians, I thought of the statistics about active laity in the Archdiocese of Denver today, the freshest groups in terms of the new evangelization are led by laity and completely led by the laity which wasn't the case 30 years ago. Thirty years ago, people generally sat in the pew and listen to what the priest said and the church was identified with the priest and the sisters. Today, the churches and this is the way the church has always really understood itself is primarily the laity and those of us who are clergy are there to serve the laity and to see the new efforts of evangelization that are being led by the laity shows me the fruit and the grace of the Second Council.

>> Okay.

>> But, nonetheless, assimilation is a big issue and the issue we were talking about earlier about public official's position on abortion shows that although we claim Catholics—

>> Catholic public officials.

>> Yes. We claim that this is the age of the educated laity, it demonstrates that that isn't always the case. People think they're educated or not. I think the church has done a very poor job in passing on the authentic apostolic faith to its people and we need to get better about that and we need to get better very, very soon.

>> Alright. Let me take another shot at you Archbishop.

>> Sure.

>> As a Bishop. The church teaching on this is very clear. A bishop doesn't represent the Pope, he doesn't represent the National Council of Bishops in his own diocese. A bishop is the representative of Christ, himself. No higher moral authority than that but listen to a bill of particulars. 1981. Pope John Paul II denounces "easy and hurried marriage annulments" which in the year, in this country, numbered 43,000; up from about 400 before the Second Council and by the year of John Paul II death, have the American bishops listen to him? Well, the number of annulments has gone up to some 50,000. 1983. The bishops issued their pastoral letter on nuclear weapons which is very difficult to read as anything other than a sharp criticism of the Reagan administration which is even then pursuing a policy, which six years later, will lead to the fall of the Berlin wall and the liberation of tens of millions. In 1984, the Bishops issued their letter on the economy which again is very difficult to read as anything other than a criticism of the Reagan administration which was issuing policies that would lead to the longest peace time expansion in the American history. And in the beginning of 2002, you got the

emergence of the sex scandals. Some 14,000 victims by the church's own count. Wrong on the cold war, wrong on the economy, tainted by sex scandals and if American Bishops won't listen to the Pope, why should American Catholics listen to them? Where is the grounding for the moral authority?

>> You know we could take each one of those issues separately I'd be able to respond. It's kind of overwhelming.

>> I'm just -- I'm doing a total.
[Simultaneous Talking]

>> Go right ahead.

>> But how do I respond to it as the guest as a whole. I don't -- I, you know certainly, the bishops made many mistakes and we sometimes spoke on -- authoritatively on things we know a little about. We ought to be very careful about doing that in terms of the sexual abuse the bishops admit as -- they admit that they've made many mistakes and there is, we need to do nothing about that except to apologize and apologize again and again, but nonetheless, despite all those problems, I think that the faith of the church has been preached clearly by many bishops and I see new signs of a growth in life in the church throughout our country and so I think, you know, for example, let's go back to the question of annulments.

>> Right.

>> The reason why there is so many annulments today is because lay people who are married don't give very good examples about fidelity and marriage to their children. And the next generation has a less clear commitment to the -- to the fidelity as required in the marriage of relationship. So to blame that somehow on the bishops is inappropriate. I mean, I think, there are fewer catholic marriages that are valid today than they were 30 or 40 years ago because people don't enter the marriage with the intention of being faithful. And for the church to acknowledge that in this marriage course is not a sign that the marriage course are corrupt. It's a sign maybe that they're not -- we're not giving a good example of married life, within a context of their family which is the most important part of the church.

>> Alright. Here's the sort of underlying question. In my mind anyway and I recognize I just dumped a lot of stuff on the table there but the question is well here, Saint Patrick's Cathedral this past spring, Pope Benedict XVI called for new spring for the church of America and you, several times in this conversation, said that you see signs of renewal. So I guess what I'm groping toward here is, you, as one of the leading clerics in the church in the United States, do you have the sense -- I can only put it crudely as the church turning a corner. Do you see a new generation of priest and laity -- do you see the new spring.

>> Well.

>> That Benedict is calling for?

>> I don't know, I mean, I do see a new spring 'cause I believe the church is always being called to conversion into new life. Whether it's going to take place in the way we want it to take place or whether it's going to take place in the context of a real collapse, I don't know, it's God's plan and I'm happy to participate at this, you know, the best I can but I don't know how to predict that but I do know—

>> Yes.

>> That Jesus rose from the and that His power is present in the church in the power of the Holy Spirit and there are many people in the church today who are enlivened by that and responding to that so I have confidence that the church will survive and more than that, the church will be vital but whether or not it will be structurally strong in the sense that it was in the 1950s, I don't know.

>> You don't know. All right.

>> I don't.

>> Matthew 22 15-21. I'd like to take you to your -- to your book here. Let me read this passage that you quote, "Then the Pharisees went into council, how to entangle him in his talk and they sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians saying, "Teacher we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully and care for no man for you do not regard the position of men, tell us then what you think, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not"? But Jesus, aware of their malice said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites, show me the money for the tax" and they brought him a coin and Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this"? They said "Caesar's", then he said to them, "Render, therefore, to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's". You write that Jesus does three vital things here. First, he acknowledges, I'm quoting from the book, first he acknowledges that Caesar has rights. Would you explain that?

>> Well He does. In another place as in the scriptures, we are told we have a duty to obey legitimate authority in the community and certainly Caesar, representing the -- you know, the political power has a responsibility for the common good of the community and we as members of that community have responsibilities to contribute it to common good. So we have responsibilities to Caesar.

>> Second of the 3 items here, Jesus, again I'm quoting from the book, Jesus desacralizes in effect he demotes Caesar.

>> Right.

>> Explain that.

>> Well, at the time when Jesus was asked a question, there was a sense in the Roman Empire that Caesar shared in divinity and somehow was given the respect that we think belongs only to God and Jesus in comments, He demoted Caesar and said that "God is God and Caesar is not". And that's very important for us to understand it today. You know, the Christian proclamation Jesus Christ is Lord is a political statement in sense because it says that no one else is Lord. You know, the President of the United States is not Lord. The king -- the kingdom is not Lord but Jesus is Lord.

>> Right.

>> That's de-sacralization of political power.

>> And third you write, quoting from your book, "Jesus stays silent about what exactly belongs to either Caesar or God". Would you explain that one again?

>> Well, I think, that it means we're invited to make those decisions in our life and that's why the involvement of Christians in the political life of a country is very important because that's our process of working out what belongs to God and what belongs to Caesar. Of course, for those of us who are Christians, everything belongs to God, even what belongs to Caesar ultimately belongs to God. But we have a duty to understand our responsibilities as citizens and to participate in the common life of the country.

>> Alright. Now -- fundamentally, two narratives about the relationship between the church and state. One holds that Christianity, the church, itself, informed the development of all the highest political attainments of our civilization the freedom and sacredness of the individual, separation of church and state. In its first three centuries, the church was defined itself an opposition to the Roman Empire and so forth. But the other narrative which I will call the Christopher Hitchens' narrative says that during the Renaissance and especially during the Enlightenment, Europe won its beliefs in human rights in equality and tolerance and so forth by struggling against the church. That the church is this -- is a kind of retrograde and our highest achievement, in fact, come in opposition to the church. Now, I know where you stand on that question because on Render Unto Caesar, you're eloquent on the first narrative. But for someone who is listening, how would you refute the Hitchens' thesis.

>> Well, I think, we also acknowledge what's true in the Hitchens' perspective that there have been times when the church has too closely identified itself with the state and because of that, has done a disservice to itself into the Christian message. But at the same time, I think, if we read history honestly, we see that the best of who we are today, in the western world, has this origin in the Jewish and Christian understandings of human dignity and our responsibility for one another for the common good. And I think that that kind of hostility that you see—

>> Right.

>> On the part of the pop atheist, you know, they are so popular today. It's pretty easy to refute historically. It's very entertaining but I don't think it's particularly damaging 'cause I don't know who really takes them seriously. I think that it's much more worry something is a kind of pressure we feel from the elites of our culture to be quiet about our faith and that's a practical atheism. It's not a theoretically. It's one that requires us to act as though God doesn't exist. And we have to resist that.

>> And how do you as an -- how does that impinge on your life? How do you feel this pressure and how do you see it in the life of your people—

>> Well, an example is the one you gave today when you showed that New York Times article. It maybe -- it always characterizes those of us who are speaking to our own communities about what we believe that somehow interfering in the political life of our country or the interfering in government and we're scolding people rather than talking about the truth. The elites -- so many of the elites of our country are hostile towards the church having a voice. And that's not very broad minded. It seems like if you want -- if you believe that everyone has a right to speak his or her mind, that includes the church and we all have a place in the public square to do that.

>> You're so -- don't you wanna smack 'em around a little bit, archbishop? You seem so placid and serene. Don't you wanna?

>> Well, you know I don't know this.

>> If you see.

>> I don't know if smacking people around does any good.

>> All right.

>> You know, but I have to say sometimes I would be moved towards angry -- to anger by some of the things that were said. But that doesn't accomplish. Anger doesn't accomplish very much except motivates you to do something more. Saint Augustine said that hope has two beautiful daughters. One of them is anger and the other is courage. If you have hope that things can be different, you get angry with the way things are. And courage is necessary to make sure they change. And so I think anger can be a good motif for moving into the future in a stronger and fresh cut away.

>> Alright. The foundational right as you described it. Again, I'm quoting from *Render Unto Caesar*, "The logic behind abortion makes all human rights politically contingent". Explain that.

>> Well, if we can decide, if we -- whether we mean government or a small group of people can decide when someone has human rights, that means, we can draw that line at different stages in human history. And that makes all of our rights contingent to me. Who gives anyone the right to decide that an unborn child has no right to life?

Governments -- whoever is making those decisions takes that authority on itself or on himself. And if we allow that to happen, if we give someone the authority to make that decision, they can make a decision in a way that affects us very negatively later in our life. So I think, it's on our self interest to oppose abortion because I'm 64 years old, I'm getting older. If they can cut life off at a certain point back there, they can cut it off at a certain point beyond which --

>> You know, you're -- so, I see the argument in principle that is to say if arbitrariness about life itself is permitted to the political system, then the arbitrariness will begin -- could in principle begin to show up in other places but you're making a much stronger argument than that. And here you talked about modern day Europe and euthanasia, lost of civilization of morale and so forth. Would it be your argument that unless the right to abortion is consistently challenged, that those -- that there will be a practical -- in practice there would be a drift toward euthanasia and so on?

>> Oh, I think there is of course.

>> That's going on already.

>> There is, of course, thing as the value of human life in the western world. And it shows itself as you -- as you just said and the desire on the part of people today to encourage euthanasia to make assisted suicide a legal thing. This is happening in our country and certainly this happened in the Netherlands and Scandinavia. So I think that if we don't consider human life sacred for the moment of conception through natural death, people will begin to decide what's useful and what's not and who's useful and who's not. And that's -- it makes all our human rights contingent, and it's very, very dangerous.

>> Quote again from Runder Unto Caesar, "My friend --" I'm quoting you, "My friends often ask me if Catholics in genuinely good conscience can vote for a pro-choice candidate. The answer is I couldn't. I know of nothing that can morally offset that kind of evil". Now there is a historical component even to your position as I make it out. 1980 for the first time one political party includes a pro-life plank in its platform. It's the Republican Party and Ronald Reagan runs the first explicitly pro-life candidacy in American history. It hadn't been an issue before 1973. And he explains that the abortion liberalization law that he signed as governor, he views as a mistake and regrets it. And in 1980, his opponent is Jimmy Carter who's pro-choice and you supported.

>> I supported Jimmy Carter.

>> Alright.

>> So, something has changed in those years.

>> Well, yes because, you know, in those days I took the position that many people take today that abortions are very important issue but one among many, probably can't do much about it now, but we will as time goes on. And so let's vote for what's possible. I

changed my mind because I saw -- I see that my position was not -- was not correct it was wrong because we've had since that time how many years have passed since then? Well, about 30 years.

>> Right.

>> And since then, we've had growing numbers of abortion. There's has been no change at all in terms of the party platforms. And I think that unless we stand up and courageously say, "You've got to do something now." We're admitting that abortion was going to be the way of life in our country and to the death of future. I don't think that's true and we have to fight it. We have to do all we can to make sure that our country understands that this is the foundational issue for the health of our society, the health of our culture.

>> Now you know in an interview with the New York Times, I guess this goes back a couple of years.

>> 4 years ago.

>> 4 years ago.

>> David Kirkpatrick is the same fellow who wrote the article today.

>> And you wrote or you said, excuse me, "I think a lot of Catholics thought that after the initial phase of the abortion on demand, we would get back -- we would back away from abortion. But every time we try to begin to limit partial birth -- every time we try to begin partial birth abortion legislation which would limit abortions, the court disembowels it, every time, every time".

>> Every time.

>> Now you sound, that actually does sound angry. My question is back during the 1980s when the bishops seemed to be devoting their attention to—

>> The economy?

>> Nuclear and the economy –

>> That's right.

>> And I don't remember bishops speaking anything like this forcefully as you'd have spoken and again and again and again in recent years now on abortion. Furthermore, what -- if one reads the -- what was it, the John Jay Report, that Jay had sent a report on the sex scandals. The huge majority of them took place in the '60s and '70s. They became public much later. They took place in the '60s and '70s, some into the early '80s. And so the question I have here is what is happening in the church? Is the church, do you

see your brother bishops going back, so to speak, to first principles or are you Charles should approve an anomaly?

>> Well, I don't know, I don't know how to make those kinds of comparison, but I do know this, I lived through the '60s. I was a Denver priest in 1970. It was a time of great confusion. The sexual revolution was taking place and all these concerns about the economy and about war and –

>> Then the council was –

>> A new council, so that was a time of confusion. And I think one of the things that the Catholic Church wanted to do during the council, legitimate thing was to -- have a friendlier face to the world so that we could attract people to Christ through our openness and our fraternal love. I did that then became confused with a certain kind of tolerance of the evils around us, and we backed off saying very clearly where the church stood on issues like life. It didn't work. I mean the church opened its windows to the world. The world closed its doors to the church. It didn't -- there wasn't a mutual kind of self giving or whatever. So I think we have to be realistic. Our approach to handling this did not work. The best way to handle something that has work is to change what you're doing, and I think that it's time for the church to be -- to change its tactics. The goal has always been the same to protect unborn human life, all of human life. Protecting the dignity from the moment of conception through death, and we have to do it in ways that work. What we did before didn't work.

>> Alright, and I'm going to try one more time. I recognized that you're not actually not interested in big historical trends, you're interested in doing your duty. That sounds to me like what you're trying to say is –

>> I don't know. I don't know that I can -- I don't know how to interpret those historical times. I don't if we can -- there a better way from it.

>> When you go to a meeting of the –

>> Bishops.

>> Of your brother bishops, what's the council called, it has a formal title?

>> Yeah, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

>> Alright. So everybody's there and when you go to a meeting, do you get slapped on the back by your brother bishops?

>> No.

>> Saying, "Charles, right on."

>> A few, but not too many.

>> Alright.

>> I think that there are differences among the bishops on how we should handle this. I think if you invest your energy and your life in going a certain direction for many years, it's difficult sometimes to admit that's not the direction to go. It's hard to say it doesn't work. But I think, you know, the sign of maturity is the willingness to admit you made a mistake and to try a different tactic. And I think that we need to grow into a mature understanding of what we have done or haven't done, and has worked or hasn't worked.

>> Alright, our final segment, the present moment. Here, August 24th, Speaker Pelosi makes her statement on meet the press, misrepresenting the church as teaching on abortion. You have a statement out the very next day. The conference of bishops follows you by a day and produces a statement and then –

>> Well, they know that they have to be more careful than I am.

>> I'm sorry, I don't mean to suggest that you –

>> But they were speaking for the body of bishops and I was speaking for myself.

>> Right. Well, they have to pass it around to more committees or more people.

>> Well, they do, they do.

>> Alright. So but the point is she speaks and the bishops find their voice and speak back. And then on August 29th, John McCain names Sarah Palin who has given birth just 4 months earlier to a Down syndrome child and a couple of days later we learned that her oldest daughter is pregnant out of wedlock and is going to keep the baby. And so the question is could -- would you like to -- the question is does that represent the best 2 weeks for the pro-life movement since 1973 in Roe versus Wade?

>> Oh, that we –

>> Do you had the feeling something is –

>> Well, I think it's a wonderful example that Palin family has given in both of those cases you've talked about. And that's the way people I know always act, quite honestly, the Catholics who were faithful to what the church teaches always give birth to that Down syndrome children. And they –

>> But you know there's only 10 percent of Down syndrome pregnancies now and in birth.

>> I know that's because we have this practice of doing this medical tests before people are born and we can discard them because the law of the land allows us to do that and that's a huge violation of human dignity. And is a violation of our capacity to love people who are in difficult circumstances. But I think it's a wonderful example, but I know many people like that. And it seems to me that the people who are the best people are the ones who've suffered because they loved their family in difficult circumstances. I hate to see and be so antiseptic and clean that people don't have those opportunities to love the difficult circumstances.

>> Alright. She's a republican. At the democratic convention which was held in your city into which you were not invited, there were 4 sessions.

>> Well, I was invited, but I wasn't invited to pray. But they invited me to come and sit and watch.

>> But you were not invited to give any invocation or –

>> No. No.

>> Alright, but can you point to hopeful signs in the democratic party, I don't know if you still -- you supported Carter, you said in '76 and 1980 but I don't know if you consider yourself a democratic still but –

>> I've never been a democrat or republican.

>> Oh really?

>> I've always been independent, but I thought Jimmy Carter showed -- he articulated the scriptures and showed a path towards hope, I thought, that's why I supported him.

>> All right.

>> I don't know. I don't know what to say. It seems to me that the abortion plank of the democrat party is even more strongly embraced in the latest platform than it was before. You know, they insist that this is the irremovable position of their party, and I think it's unfortunate. It seems to me that Catholics and Democratic party and there are lots of them, lots of good Catholics, I hope right in the party. They should really force their party to drop that platform plan to change it. They have an obligation that if they're going to be democrats to do what they can to change things. As republicans have an obligation -- the republican Catholics have obligation to do what they can to make sure that the platform of the Republican Party respects human dignity and the common good.

>> Alright, now this is a total flyer of questions. Not related to historical trends or church teachings, I just -- it occurred to me, and I thought if I have a chance to ask you, I'm going to ask you. What I've noticed, what's been commented on mostly in blogs, the mainstream press hasn't picked it up too much as best I can tell. But at campaign stop

after campaign stop, at Sarah Palin's campaign stops, people who have Down syndrome or autistic children or other special needs children are turning up with these children. And it seems to me, I'm putting this crudely, you've probably thought about it more deeply than I have, I'm sure you have. That there's a way in which, there's an astonishing moment taking place in the political system right now, whereby these people, they said the statistics are 90 percent of Down syndrome pregnancies end in abortion. So, this 10 percent are on the margin culturally, the culture does nothing to support them or celebrate them. They make silent sacrifices everyday.

>> They are embarrassed, because the culture looks down on them for having these children.

>> And suddenly this political figure simply by her presence validates them.

>> Not only that but validates having 5 children.

>> And validates having 5 children. As a father of 5, I'm happy to hear that validation.
[Laughter]

>> But here's the bit, so she validates the sacrifices of -- to put crudely the 10 percent, but the other 90 percent? The political system can validate but it cannot grant or extend forgiveness. How? Do you see where I'm at there? There are people -- I remember in the White House in the old days when I was a speech writer. One of the arguments against mentioning the pro-life position in speeches by President Regan was that so many millions of people have had abortions and you don't want to remind them of this horrible experience.

>> Well, we're told the same thing in terms of preaching in the church.

>> Oh really?

>> Yes, whenever I preach about abortion or even about divorce, I often have people come after me -- after me after mass and criticize me for saying anything about it, because maybe they're having abortion.

>> Yes.

>> Or they are from a broken family. And somehow we're supposed to make everybody happy by not speaking the truth. I think that's very unfortunate.

>> But you're in a position of being able to extend forgiveness.

>> Oh, we all are, I mean I'm sure I can formally.

>> So that's the -- so the question I'm trying to ask you is how does the society if we follow the Chaput program and reassert the fundamental moral principles here, you've got tens of millions of people. How do you move toward healing? I hate that --

>> If in terms of those --

>> For the society, yeah, yeah.

>> Well, you know, I think getting back to --

>> In other words, excuse me, I wanna just -- you've been saying that the Catholic position on abortion is not distinctively Catholic?

>> No.

>> That it ought to be an American position.

>> Right.

>> So the question is, you as a bishop can extend sacramental forgiveness, people can go to confession and there's a certain sense in which that is a profound closure or healing. But that's not available to the wider society?

>> Oh, but in terms of -- we can study our constitution. We can go back and historically understand what the founders meant by what they gave us. It's a great gift, you know, I think our constitution for some of us are very, very proud of. And it does embody the right to life, you know, and that should be interpreted in that clear distinct way and not in the vague definitions that is sometimes has been given to us by the Supreme Court. So I think our constitution can become a common document that leads to healing if we take it seriously.

>> I see. Alright. Three final questions. And if you can just give me a couple of sentences or tight little paragraph, if that's possible. Some who are watching this interview there's a patriotic American who's an atheist, just can't bring himself to become a believer. What is an atheist to make of of an archbishop?

>> I don't know. But we are both American citizens. We both love our constitution. We see the history of our country as a history of great opportunity for believers and nonbelievers alike. Why would we ever move in a direction of pushing any group out of the public square? I think nonbelievers who are committed to human dignity and the common good have everybody's much right to stand in that square and talk as I do, and we're brothers and sisters in a common cause.

>> Alright. Here's somewhere, let's pose it, there is someone watching. A young man who was thinking of, who had thought about becoming a priest but may have been put off by the scandals that begin to emerge in 2002, or a young woman who's thinking about

becoming a nun and just as others, just too much confusion, there is too much taint of scandal. What would you say to such a person?

>> I think that the young woman ought to go visit a convent where there are young women who have become nuns. And the gentleman ought to go to a seminary and see that there are many young men who have the same horror of what happened but have a love with the church and are gonna make sure by their own lives that it doesn't happen again. I mean it's the real human beings who've embraced the call to be sisters and brothers that should be the greatest source of encouragement by those young people.

>> You have two seminaries in the Archdiocese of Denver as I recall?

>> We do.

>> How are your numbers?

>> Our numbers are terrific. We have 115 students studying there this year and we have somewhere between 20 -- 75 and 80 studying to be priest for the archdiocese in Denver right now.

>> Alright. And the last question, we're out of time. What 2 sentences would you like to speak to the next President of the United States?

>> I just like to have the opportunity to speak to him.
[Laughter]

>> Regardless of who it is, because I think that it's important for the President of the United States to be partners with the religious leaders of our various faith communities. And so, I would hope that there would be an openness to dialogue and to listen. Because the church has a long history of caring for human beings, a long history of working for the common good and protecting human dignity. And so I think we have something to offer. We want to be partners in the process of making our country the great countries that the founders wanted us to be.

>> Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, Order of Friars Minor, Archbishop of Denver, and the author of "Render Unto Caesar". Thank you!

>> Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

>> At Hoover Institution, I'm Peter Robinson for Uncommon Knowledge, thanks for joining us.