

Who's Rich? Who's Poor?

✘ Almost eighty Catholic educators recently criticized U.S. House Speaker, John Boehner, due to speak at Washington's Catholic University. They claim his record is "among the worst in Congress" when it comes to protecting the poor. The letter called on Speaker Boehner to "reawaken your familiarity" with church teachings on the subject of poverty. The letter also mentioned the 2012 budget and called it "particularly cruel to pregnant women and children."

This irked me for a number of reasons.

While many others condemned Notre Dame for inviting President Obama to give the commencement address in 1969 because of his pro-abortion stand, I wonder if these same eighty Catholic educators wrote a similar letter to Notre Dame or President Obama for failing to adhere to the Christian teaching of pro-life.

I also wonder if any of this band of eighty ever criticized other politicians, like Nancy Pelosi and John Kerry, both cafeteria Catholics, who are pro-abortion and living in open defiance of Catholic teaching.

The missive also criticizes the tax cuts for the wealthy. This brings me to my second point. Who exactly are the wealthy in this country? If you believed President Obama, you're rich if you and your spouse earn \$250,000 a year. Well, to someone earning minimum wage, \$250,000 sounds like a whole lot of money. Actually, to most people, including me, \$250,000 is a lot of money. But does earning that amount make someone "rich"?

I don't know how you define "rich," but, in my opinion, if someone, no matter what age, can stop working today, and still maintain the same lifestyle he or she enjoyed while working, relying only on their accumulated assets, I would consider

that person "rich." But then the next question is, "so what?" If that person has been able to amass a sufficient estate to take care of himself and his family, for the rest of his life, without government assistance, I say, "GREAT!" and the government shouldn't penalize someone for making money, investing it, and planning ahead for their family's future.

Which brings me to my final point. The poor. How do you define "poor"? I find this question a lot harder to answer. Rich people either inherit their money or earn it. On the other hand, the issue of poverty, whatever your definition of poverty is, results from a wide variety of factors.

There was a time in this country when family, friends, church and community took care of the poor. That's the way it should be. Those who provided the help and those who received help were accountable to each another. The community knew when someone needed help and the person in need could not scam the givers. People gave voluntarily.

But then the government stuck its nose somewhere it didn't belong. The 9-to-5 civil servants who couldn't wait to punch out, started doling out money to anyone who asked for it, without any concern whether there was a legitimate need or not. After all, it wasn't the government workers' money – so who cared?

The coffers have been hemorrhaging money ever since and the lines of those with their hands out have gotten longer and longer.

President Obama, for example, is a perfect example of someone who wants to force charitable giving by being "neighborly," a euphemism for income redistribution.

Of course, there are people who are in real need. But, because there's no real oversight, no one will ever be able to determine who is deserving of public assistance. The entitlement monster created by the government is so gigantic

and out of control at this point, it's impossible to stop the fraud even though we're \$14 trillion in debt and can't afford to continue to throw money away.

In my line of work, child abuse and neglect, I've seen so much government waste trying to provide families with services. I've seen parents who receive bus passes to visit their children turn around and sell those passes for drugs. I've seen parents who receive aid panhandle and pick up a hundred bucks a day. How about the guy in Michigan who won \$2 million in a lottery but continued for nearly a year to swipe his food stamp electronic card? When questioned about it, he said, "If you're going to ...try to make me feel bad, you aren't going to do it." And let's not forget the \$1.4 billion of Katrina funds used by scammers to fund vacations, porno and a sex change operation.

It's also unbelievable to me that someone could actually receive 99 weeks of unemployment benefits for not working. How many people are receiving benefits but have cash-paying jobs on the side? Just like welfare, being handed money by the government for doing nothing clearly removes the incentive for looking for a job. I wonder how many people miraculously find work after their benefits run out.

Because government is involved, there's no way to ever track dishonest people who scam the system. We're now seeing how difficult it is to stop these handouts to anyone who asks for them under the guise of being "needy" or "poor."

Speaker Boehner is trying to rein in spending but the recipients and their spokesmen, like those eighty Catholic educators, are yelling and screaming, "You can't stop giving away free money to people who do nothing for it because they're needy and poor." Really? By whose definition?

I'm afraid I do get it – it's the nature of the beast.