

Commentary by Dawn A. Rager January 22, 2009

In light of the historic inauguration of our first African-American President, many say we must give Obama and his new administration *a chance*. Moreover, Christians should pray for his success.

Yes – *and no*.

We should indeed pray that he is successful in protecting and defending our country from terrorists, rebuilding our faltering economy, and saving and creating jobs for the American people. Perhaps most importantly, we should pray that he genuinely and sincerely looks to God for guidance in all areas of his presidency.

However, let's be clear – we should *not pray* that he is successful in his stated goals to enact certain policies or legislation, such as the Freedom of Choice Act, which would invalidate every state statute limiting abortion and drive the nail in the coffin (excuse the grim metaphor) for the widely-supported restriction of parental notification. This same act could also coerce physicians – who pledge to assist, maintain, and support life – to violate their oath, will, and deeply held beliefs. Inevitably, this would force the closings of many Catholic hospitals whose administrators and church sponsors vigorously oppose the performing of abortions as a matter of their Constitutionally-protected freedom of religion.

It's quite appropriate to be *selective* when we pray for the new President's success. After all, scripture instructs us to respect those God has placed in power and pray for them often, and it would simply be unpatriotic and un-American to *not support* our President and leader. However, it would be absurd to pray for his success in enacting and legislating policies which we believe are contrary to God's Word and ultimate plan for us. I wonder how many great minds have been sent to us to help us with our economic woes, social challenges, and to cure ravaging disease, but we've ignorantly and irrespectively tossed them aside?

Yes, let's embrace the almost Reaganesque optimism, love and admiration of country, and sense of hope the new President exhorts. Let's embrace his John F. Kennedy likeness of working together for the country's well-being ("...ask not what your country and can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."). But we must also carefully examine his policies with a critical, analytical, and questioning eye.

The inauguration of President Obama has helped to "make right" the long-standing intolerance of African-Americans embedded in our history of human slavery and oppression. For more than half a century, our nation defined and counted slaves as three fifths of a person. Nothing signifies the full personhood of African-Americans more powerfully or extraordinarily now than seeing an African-American take the highest office of President. What a terrible and disappointing tragedy of historic magnitude would it be for him to then close his eyes and turn his back on the personhood and value of the unborn and defenseless.

**Outline provided by Colin A. Hanna, LetFreedomRingUSA.org*