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(Unedited Transcript)

Okay. Well, thank you all very much for having me, and I want to thank the Eisenhower Foundation for this very, very provocative day, and I want to acknowledge Fred Harris who I think is -- he's certainly one of my prophets for our times.

And I'm very humbled to be on this panel. I didn't know Monsignor Baroni, except honestly by reading about him, but I certainly wish I had polled for him.

(Laughter.)

And I would have loved to have been part of his team. And one of the things that really struck me when I was reading up on him was when he said that -- and the previous speaker referred to this as well -- that an organizer needs deep respect for ordinary people. So, frankly, does a successful pollster. And listening to the power of the little voices is really what we think of as our profession. So I was very, very humbled by his leadership.

Well, I want to ask the question, is the public ready for Monsignor Baroni's dialogue today, and to share with you some examples of both where they are and where they aren't. And I think he would be both energized and saddened by our times, and the challenge that that represents for all of us in this room.

First of all, America is a deeply religious nation, and I think -- and I was very moved by the previous speaker's comments, and I think that as progressives we need more often not to cede the terrain of faith and religion. It's too often used now I think as a tool, unfortunately, for conservative policies, and not enough as a tool for progressives' policies.

And when you look at the public, this is a completely false divide because red and blue states are both deeply religious in this country, and I just finished writing a book that (unintelligible) may surprise people. It's called *What Do Women Really Want?* -- that age old question. And I wrote it as a liberal Democratic pollster, I wrote it with a conservative Republican pollster. The book is premised on the thought that women are not red or blue, they don't look for right or left, they look for right or wrong, and women are all purple out there. Any three women can agree on more than most congressional committees can agree on right now -- despite the leadership of someone like the congresswoman, whom I have great, great respect for. So, it's a disappointing time in that regard.

In terms of faith, 39 percent of voters consider themselves born-again or evangelical Christians. Eighty-Nine percent of Americans say they believe in Jesus. Seventy-Five percent believe that God performs miracles. Sixty-Seven percent believe that you must accept Christ as your savior to get into heaven. And Fifty-Seven percent believe you must accept Christ as your savior or you'll go to hell, which are pretty strong statements.

So this is a deeply religious country. And that religion, and that terrain is often being ceded, I think, to the conservative policies, and not enough energized for the progressive policies.

In fact, I think the one place that is not happening -- and I think it comes out of a real commitment that Monsignor had to diversity, is the African-American church. And I think the African-American church is the one place where we are often seeing faith used for progressive ends, but we need to expand that.

What does moral values mean? Well, first of all the last election was very much a values-oriented election. It was not a moral values election, though, as it has often been narrowly defined in post-election analysis. In fact, if you look at the results, only 22 percent of the voters actually mentioned moral values as the number one issue on which they voted. That means reporters are often not very good at math. Seventy-Eight percent of voters pick some other issue.

But I think what Monsignor Baroni taught us is that those other issues that they picked: terrorism, security, the economy, health care, retirement, the war; those are moral issues.

And in fact, recent data that was just reported today by PBS in a new poll that actually asks people, "What do you mean by a moral values?" Thirty-Six percent of the public said, "I mean something like personal values, like responsibility or honesty." Another 26 percent said "I mean family values like the impact of Hollywood culture on our children, the Internet on our children." Ten percent said social justice. Eight percent said compassion. Only 10 percent said gay marriage or abortion as the number one thing that they meant by moral values.

We need very much to develop a values-oriented language, and we need to develop a much broader sense of values, the kind of language that Father Baroni actually developed long ago.

When we asked people what are the top-ranked values for them, the number one value -- and I think Father Baroni would have been very pleased with this -- the number one value out there in people's minds is ensuring that everyone is given equal opportunity in life, regardless of their race or gender. That value ranked 88 percent, so that is a major part of their personal definitions of values, and ranked ahead of every other value that was stated.

Second was being compassionate and helping those who are less fortunate. And those two values were 20 points ahead of any other value mentioned, including both more progressive and more conservative values. Those were obviously values that were very, very powerful in the dialogue of Father Baroni, but not very often, sadly, articulated in the name of faith or values today, in our society.

Now, I argue to progressives that we can be very emboldened, and I wish we had more leadership like the leadership represented on this panel, and also the leadership that we're celebrating today. When we ask people, "What's the number one value that you associate with Democrats and progressives?" People said the number one value they associated was ensuring equal opportunity -- ironically, their own number one value. But you certainly don't see a dialog out there where progressives and Democrats feel emboldened in their values, or audacious, as bold as the leadership that was represented by Father Baroni.

There are values, very important values to people on the conservative side, as well. The number one value that is associated with conservatives and Republicans is strengthening

families. And I would also challenge us as progressives that not only is the current agenda immoral as was outlined in the documents that we have, but it is far from strengthening families. And I think that again, that is not an area that we should cede.

So what are some of the opportunities that we have for a values-oriented dialogue, that would at least make Father Baroni smile, if not proud of us?

Well first of all, let's take the ownership society. The ownership society is the current dialog that's being issued out there. It says that we are free from government and in control of our own lives, and that we should reflect a faith in American people that they can manage their lives and their tax dollars, better than politicians in Washington D.C. And those are some powerful fighting words, and intimidating words, unfortunately, in this town.

Well, we tested against that, what we call the "mutual opportunities" society, and we clearly would have been able to craft the language much better if we had had Father Baroni whispering in our ear -- or I guess he didn't whisper very much. Loudly talking in our ear.

But we said that the federal budget should reflect the priorities of a mutual opportunities society, in which everyone pays their fair share, and everyone has the opportunity to benefit. And then we went on to talk about health care and public safety, and a greater sacrifice for the wealthiest Americans, recognizing that we are strongest as a nation when we combine our resources.

Now, even in these tough times and even not as ably worded as Father Baroni would have had us word it, the opportunities society beat the ownership society 57 percent to 34 percent.

And I love the comments. One Pittsburgh man said, "Well, the ownership society sounds like those who have, those who make, those who have what they have, and the guy on the bottom, 'Sorry, Bud you fell on the bottom rung of the ladder, that's what you got.'"

And another person said, "In a mutual opportunities society, we are all working towards this common thing. Everyone pays, everyone receives."

So Americans, I think the average person, the "little voices," as they were referred to, showing quite a bit of wisdom, if not great grammar, in their conversation about what are the choices out there.

Let me tell you another issue that is facing us and that I have actually been very proud to work with the Catholic Church on in a number of states, and that is increasing the minimum wage. Everywhere that we test increasing the minimum wage, voters don't realize they are not supposed to be for this and so they overwhelmingly support it, across party lines.

But I think there's more to that dialogue when we look at the messages that test best, that speak to the degree in which the public is ready for a much more values-oriented dialogue about what does public morality mean?

The best testing message in favor of minimum wage is that no one who works full time should live in poverty. Most Americans work hard and play by the rules, and they should see the results of their hard work. People also respond very much to the language that

minimum-wage workers make only \$206 per week; many of them parents and adults trying to raise children and making ends meet after working full-time.

Now we didn't test, although I wish we had, that that's immoral. It is immoral, it's wrong. And Americans are willing, and every time they've been given a chance to, to change that.

One of the things I think I learned from reading about Father Baroni, and those of you who actually knew him will have to tell me if this is right, is that he very powerfully brought the story of the common person to the table, that he illustrated the policies (unintelligible) in favor, not only by empowering the little voices but also by bringing their experience to the table.

And we found that personal stories also very, very powerful in terms of moving policy. But often -- and I love this quote over here to my left, about how the middle-class approaches Mrs. Brown with their secondhand underwear and their sympathy check -- that often people will want to fix the person, rather than the system. And one of the things that we have to figure out is when we're telling personal stories, to make sure that people don't want to just fix the person; that they want to fix the system that produced that situation.

Now, we do a lot of work on health care, and we find often that people will say, "Well, but I gave, you know, I definitely don't think that person should be uninsured, and in fact I contributed a check at the grocery store, put my dollar in the can so that the family could get the kidney surgery that they needed," without really, really fighting for universal health care coverage. And I think that was a clarion call for Monsignor Baroni, decades ago, and I think it's well over time that we acted on that call.

We've actually tested that the budget is a moral document. And it shows that in some cases, the public isn't completely ready for everything that Father Baroni was talking about. And in fact, people didn't like calling the budget a "moral document." They said, "No, no. It's not a moral document, it's money. It's just a spreadsheet." But they did think that it reflected the wrong priorities, something that it seems to me he often spoke of.

And one of the lessons that I learned by reading my panelists, the notes of the principles of Father Baroni, was that language mattered a lot. And we found that in the budget conversation, that language mentioned a lot, as well. People responded more strongly to talking about protecting the vulnerable among us. And frankly, "poverty" isn't a great word, sadly, in our country. And sadly, Katrina has not dramatically changed people's attitudes about poverty.

Now, in polling that another foundation just released last week, we found that over 90 percent of Americans believe that there is a big gap between the rich and poor, and over 90 percent of Americans believe that poverty was a big problem in our country before Katrina. So these are core values, but we shouldn't think that Katrina, sadly, has particularly mobilized the public. And it perhaps is because we haven't had anyone who would have been as fiery and eloquent in condemning the situation as Father Baroni would have been.

We also found that people wanted to help the elderly. They didn't want to particularly help seniors. They thought, "There are a lot of wealthy seniors out there playing golf, but I want to help the elderly." And that people wanted to help children, as well.

One of the things that I love, if I understand his leadership, was that he could tell truth to power. And he didn't care, it appears to me from casual observation, he didn't care who he was calling out. And the wealthy, big business, politicians, or other institutions in our society.

And I want to call attention -- again, something that we've seen a very strong voice of faith behind. In the coming week, we are about to have Wal-Mart week. As an illustration of both a corporation that is not behaving in the way that it should towards workers, and also a broader phenomena, frankly, than just Wal-Mart, about wrong behavior. And I think one of the things that's so eloquent about Father Baroni is in our book about women, we say American women don't care about right and left, they care about right and wrong. And there are just certain things that all Americans agree are wrong.

Now, people like Wal-Mart. They have a favorable image to them, and certainly in this economy you may need to buy some things at Wal-Mart, but they also think it's an American success story. And an American success story does not make profits unfairly, by not allowing health care for workers and by not paying fairly. And when we also talk about the fact that this is -- five of the wealthiest people in America are the Waltons. This is a company that could put just two percent of their wealth, and could insure their entire workforce. I think Father Baroni would have called us all out on that, as shoppers and as owners, as stock owners and as owners of a company. And again, this isn't just about one company, it's increasingly about a phenomenon in our country where he would have spoken truth to power.

Additionally I think he always was, it seems to me, a strong spokesperson, but I think I would have spoken particularly strongly on the health-care issue today. And I will predict for you that I think the 2008 election will be the health-care election. I think that both as an economic issue and as a personal issue, the current system we have is just completely unsustainable.

But having said that, when you look at the voices of the little people today, the ordinary people, 87 percent agree that everyone has a right to affordable health care coverage in this country. Seventy-nine percent agree that government should guarantee that everyone has affordable health coverage. And notice there, we use of the dreaded G-word, "Government," and we still got 79 percent in agreement. And 77 percent agreed that large profitable corporations should pay their fair share to provide health care for their employees.

Now, it isn't -- I think that Father Baroni would also have spoken truth to us as the little people. And of course, one of the things that is holding much of the agenda out right now is America's tax sensitivity. Americans don't want to see their taxes increased. Only a third of the Americans even want to see their taxes increased \$200 to deal with poverty in America, and this is post-Katrina. Those are obviously disappointing statistics.

Now, part of it is that America feels very short of money. But with the tremendous wealth in our country, I think that Father Baroni would have also have said to us that all of us can do better, and that we can all say that there should be changes out there.

So I think Father Baroni would have said there are both good things -- if I were his pollster I would have been reporting to him that there are both good things and bad things out there. There are places where I think the attitudes in the public would make them proud, and places where we miss his leadership but where we can build on those attitudes to take and make changes in our system, and they kind of leadership that the congresswoman has shown.

And then there are places where I think as his pollster, I would report to him that we are being disappointing, as well, although I think he had a good sense of humor about how the public disappointed him on a regular basis, and I think he would have called us to take the good and the bad, and to make sure that we're not having the same conversation 25 years from now, when we celebrate his hundredth birthday. So thank you for including me.