

# Cardinal O'Malley Whiffs on Obama Decision

Opportunities such as the one that presented itself Thursday for Cardinal Sean O'Malley, archbishop of Boston, come around maybe once in a lifetime.

It's baseball season, so a baseball analogy seems appropriate.

Cardinal O'Malley, with all due respect – a big swing and a miss.

At an interfaith service at Cathedral of the Holy Cross, President Obama spoke about the tragedy that occurred during the Boston Marathon Monday. More than 2,000 people packed the cathedral and religious and political leaders joined community mourners in a healing service in which the president spoke about healing and how those responsible for this heinous crime will be brought to justice.



*U.S. President Barack Obama talks to Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston during the "Healing Our City" interfaith memorial service April 18 at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross for the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing. (CNS photo/Brian Snyder, Reuters)*

I understand that in times of national crisis, Americans want to hear from their president. When it comes to the cruel, ugly and violent vice of terrorism thrust upon us by those who hate our way of life and despise everything that American stands for, when we witness destruction, devastation and death so vividly, we want to know our way of life will not be altered and that freedom will win out in the end.

We mourn for those who died or are injured. We want our president to assure us that we will be as safe as possible in a society where hatred and utter disrespect for life pervade our daily existence.

Social media sites were crackling with opinions on Obama's participation in this service when he has so clearly been on the polar opposite side of so many social and life issues that the Church defends. From what I saw, the response from Catholics

was overwhelmingly against Obama's participation in this healing service held in a Catholic cathedral.

Why?

President Obama is adamantly pro-choice. President Obama "changed his mind" on marriage and does not support marriage between one man and one woman - he does not want the government or courts to defend the Defense of Marriage Act. In fact, he wants it overturned. President Obama's signature achievement is the passing of the Affordable Care Act - known as Obamacare - in which a mandate exists that Catholic institutions must provide insurance for their employees that includes contraceptive and abortifacient measures, forcing Catholics and those of other religions to act against their conscience and faith.



*Boston Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley joins other faith leaders during the "Healing Our City" interfaith memorial service. (CNS photo/Gregory L. Tracy, The Pilot)*

Let's be clear about one thing. Our bishops have come out to speak in favor of Catholic teaching on the above issues - some more than others. But our bishops have also on occasion missed opportunities to take a stand, to challenge the political and community leaders who at the worst mock our beliefs and at best turn their collective cheeks in dismissive fashion. I am reminded of Obama being invited to give a commencement speech in 2009 at the University of Notre Dame, an institution of higher Catholic education.

I was embarrassed for our faith that day. Should have never been allowed to happen.

The question is, can our bishops be pastoral, ecumenical and the visible light of Christ in our world while at the same time taking extraordinary risks and making big stands in the public arena when appropriate? And the next question is, when they choose not to, are they missing out on opportunities to evangelize, to heal brokenness in our society and to show the way to our merciful and loving Lord, even in - or especially in - times of crisis? In the case of the situation this week in Boston, could Cardinal O'Malley have said he and his Catholic flock in the archdiocese of Boston would have been proud to be a part of a healing interfaith service, but

because of our president's adamant and public opposition to so many Catholic teachings, he could not with good conscience approve of the decision to host such a service in the cathedral?

Bishops, we need you now more than ever.

Be bold. Be courageous.