

## Joe Biden Being Catholic: In His Own Words

Like many Catholics, Joe Biden doesn't wear his religion on his sleeve. But Joe Biden is Catholic to his core. Read here Biden's reflections about his Catholic upbringing and values from his book *"Promises to Keep."* But first, watch Stephen Colbert's interview with him on Sept. 11, 2015; the interview was in two parts, and within it we learn how their Catholic faith helped both survive their horrific personal tragedies. Watch it dry-eyed if you can at this link: [Joe Biden on the Late Show with Stephen Colbert in Two Parts](#)

### Growing Up Catholic

Biden was born into a staunchly Irish Catholic family in Scranton, PA where Sundays started with Mass.

*"My attendance was not optional. The entire Finnegan clan rode over to St. Paul's Catholic Church together and church always felt like an extension of home. I had worked my way through the questions of the Baltimore catechism: Who made us?...Who is God?...What is a Spirit?...What do we mean when we say that God is all good? ...I could practically recite the entire catechism. I'd memorized the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. I'd been to my first confession. My Grandpop Finnegan had taught me to say the Rosary." Biden notes that the sermons at St. Paul's were "more about doing good than being good."*

### The Influence of Nuns

Biden attended Catholic schools where he developed a lifelong admiration for nuns.

*"Wherever there were nuns, there was home...My idea of self, of family, of community, of the wider world comes straight from my religion...The nuns are one of the reasons I'm still a practicing Catholic."*

Years later when Biden was running for president the first time, he campaigned in Dubuque, Iowa by visiting a convent but on the way, he stopped at HyVee grocery store to buy a couple of gallons of ice cream because:

*"Jean Finnegan Biden's son does not visit nuns empty handed. It reminded me of grade school, of the last days before the holidays when all my classmates would be presenting their little Christmas offerings to the nuns. The desk would be a mound of little specialty soaps. The sisters smelled like lavender the rest of the year."*

### Inspired by JFK's Challenge

When John F. Kennedy was inaugurated as the first Catholic president in 1961, Biden was struck by how much his address mirrored the teachings he had absorbed in his Catholic grade school and high school, and especially his home.

*"We have to do good works on earth, Kennedy reminded us, because it is our duty ...What he said was a powerful public confirmation of the things I'd learned growing up. What we valued most – equity, fairness and simple justice – were ours to protect, not God's ... It was our obligation to try to make our world a better place."*

### **Tragedy: A Test of Faith**

Biden's faith in a loving God was severely tested after his first wife, Neilia, and baby daughter, Naomi, were killed in a car accident just after he was elected to the Senate in 1972.

*"No words, no prayer, no sermon gave me ease. I felt God had played a horrible trick on me and I was angry."*

Eventually however he made his peace with God.

*"I started to think of my rage at God as an unbecoming form of egotism. What was more self-indulgent than to think God had been busying himself with my particular circumstances? There's a little cartoon I keep on my desk. In the first panel a guy just struck by lightning, charred, is shaking his fist at God. 'Why me?' In the second panel God answers with a shrug: 'Why not you?' Why not me? Exactly. Why not me?"*

### **Raising His Sons**

Biden was left to care for his two severely-injured young sons, Beau and Hunter, with the help of his sister, Valerie, until he got married to his second wife, Jill. He commuted home to Delaware every night to put his sons to bed.

*"I'd take them up to their room and lie in bed with them, put my hands on them, Talk to them. We'd say our prayers together including three Hail Mary's like Grandpop Finnegan always did."*

### **Mature Reflections on His Catholic Faith**

Years later when Biden's son, Hunter, was a student at Georgetown University, he asked his father to speak on the impact of the Church on him. His mature answer is worth quoting at some length because it seems more relevant now than ever.

*"The central lesson I received from the Catholic Church, my Catholic education and my own parents had always been the governing force in my political career. **To wit, the greatest sins on this earth are committed by people of standing and means who abuse their power...Jesus didn't spend time with the Pharisees. Jesus hung out with the prostitutes, with the lepers, with the bad guys...In my house the lessons about the abuse of power were constant, big and small...***

*"With power and privilege, I was taught, comes a responsibility to treat others with respect and fairness.*

*"Generosity is not simply a virtue, it's a Commandment. And when we see people abusing power it is our duty to intercede on their behalf."*

*"As I looked back on my career, it was obvious that what had always animated me was the belief that we should stand up to those who abused power, whether it was political, economic or physical."*

**Joe Biden never flaunts his Catholic faith but it formed him and he lives it.**

**Elect Joe Biden as our second Catholic president!**

Read more about Joe's beliefs in this recent profile: [Joe Biden Openly Discusses His Catholic Faith](#)