

Ethics and Leadership

National Leadership Turns a Page

**By
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By the time you read this, the nominations for president in both parties may be settled. The race to date has certainly been different than those of the past. For the first time in American history one candidate will be either a woman or an African-American. The leading Republican candidate, John McCain, previously mounted candidacies for the office, but his maverick style was often his undoing. This time it seems to have served him well. Sen. Obama's most winning trait is the promise of a new form of leadership and he has secured the position of the candidate of change. Who would have thought that the first woman to campaign effectively for the presidency would have to defend herself against charges of politics as usual?

We who can remember as far back as fifty years ago have also been surprised by the scrutiny of the candidates' faith that has occurred during this campaign and perhaps even more by their willingness to discuss it. Gov. Mitt Romney's reluctance proved the exception, but he often was questioned unfairly for a faith not well known to many Americans and sometimes cast in a bad light. Interestingly, as the field has narrowed, such discussions are fewer, and military and foreign policy as well as important public policies such as health care have come forward.

Faith and change are two dominant themes now. It is not hard to see why. Americans have little patience for protracted military conflict. For nearly thirty years, Christian political groups have been important November voting blocs.

Many Alverniaans will cast their first presidential vote this November. What sort of leader do you want? Do you think it matters? (You should.) There is no substitute for becoming informed. Whether the media you use are the new media of the internet, including YouTube, or the traditional print sources, there is plenty available. If the campaign strategists have been correct in thinking that the candidates' faith matters to you because your faith or values are part of your electoral decision, there are many faith-based organizations and media who have analyses ready.

Alvernia faculty will also weigh in on the issues, as has a nationally regarded speaker already on our campus. Last month, William Byron, S.J., a noted public intellectual, spoke on the campaign in light of Catholic Social Teaching. This month, four Alvernia faculty will look at the place of the "God-talk" in the campaign from their specific disciplines of nursing, biology, social psychology, and theology. In the fall, two more will look at the media's handling of the campaign issues.

In this age of assessment, serious academics have been writing important philosophies of education. Martha Nussbaum, one of the most distinguished philosophers working today, speaks of the formation of citizens as the primary purpose of higher education. But today's student must be the active learner. I urge you to take advantage of the available resources.

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