

## Deacon Michael McElwee

### Religious Perspectives – Roman Catholicism

#### What are some misunderstood or controversial practices within your religion?

“As Catholics we believe in a trinity for god. And often times we will bless ourselves in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the holy spirit. But we believe it’s one god, just different manifestations of this one god. So we are monotheist. Often times some people misunderstand Catholics veneration of the saints. Those who were human beings but who lived very holy, exemplary lives and we believe they’re in heaven with God. So, Catholics will pray to the saints asking them, basically as you ask a friend would you pray for me I have a need, and particularly Mary, Jesus’ mother. We feel is a very powerful intercessor but we don’t worship Mary as a god or a goddess. That she’s the mother of Jesus and just like when she was at the wedding feast and they ran out of wine, she was the one who said, ‘hey, they need more wine.’ So, she can be very sensitive and bring our, human needs to her son who is, where we really put our worship.

And one other issue, it’s not so much an issue anymore but was but back in, you are all too young to remember the 1960’s, but when John Kennedy was running for President, there was a big issue then, ‘well, is he going to take orders from the Pope.’ And, that’s not what Catholics do. I mean we certainly admire our leaders but Catholics are called to follow our conscience. And, there’s a little word put in there it’s called *informed conscience*. And we are to inform our conscience through study of scriptures and what the church teaches but everyone is called to ultimately follow their own conscience. And if people have duties such as being the President of the United States, they have constitutional duties, they’re not going to be taking orders from the Pope. So that’s kind of a misunderstood thing but hopefully a bias that we have gotten beyond in our country.”

#### Disclaimer

The preceding individual religious awareness perspective is provided by a practicing member from a religious group for the purpose of better understanding the religious practices of others. This individual perspective is designed to orient viewers to religious aspects/beliefs for a referenced group. It should not be interpreted as official or final religious doctrine or as the official views of, or endorsed by, the United States Government, the Department of Defense, or the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.