

Diaz confirmation hearing amicable

Michael Sean Winters | Jul. 22, 2009 NCR Today

This morning, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held its confirmation hearing for Miguel Diaz, nominated by President Barack Obama to be the U.S. ambassador to the Holy See. The hearing was chaired by Sen. Robert Casey, D-Pa. The only other members of the committee present for the hearing were Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., and Sen. James Risch, R-Idaho.

The hearing was thoroughly amicable.



In his opening remarks, Diaz discussed the future of bilateral relations with the Holy See.

He noted the United States and the Holy See have a mutual interest in "working towards peace and prosperity around the world." Diaz also referenced his theological work on "the relationship of religion and human identity" and his knowledge of Catholic social teaching, calling attention to Pope Benedict's recent encyclical which focused on these same themes.

Casey asked Diaz for his assessment of the recent meeting between Pope Benedict XVI and President Obama. Diaz noted that the president and the pope discussed inter-cultural dialogue, outreach to Muslim communities, a mutual commitment to inter-religious dialogue, the situation in Honduras, bioethics and abortion at their meeting, and he pledged to seek common ground in these areas if he is confirmed.

This was the only question posed to Mr. Diaz.

Diaz was introduced by Minnesota's two senators, Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken. Diaz makes his home in Minnesota where he taught theology at St. John's University in Collegeville.

In his introductory remarks, Franken noted that Diaz represented his home state's commitment to education and praised him for his erudition, calling him "a leading theologian" in the United States. Klobuchar concluded her encomiums by saying "Mr. Diaz loves the United States of America and he loves the Catholic church." She noted that the post was ideally suited for a scholar because the assignment does not entail the typical ambassadorial concerns such as trade relations and visa processing.

Diaz was accompanied by his wife and four children, as well as some students from St. John's. Four other ambassadorial nominees were also questioned during the hearing.

For more on Diaz, see the *NCR* story [Miguel H. D'az named U.S ambassador to the Vatican](#) [1].

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