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# Burke Strikes Again

Michael Sean Winters | Sep. 23, 2009 NCR Today

In the nineteenth century, the United States bishops requested that the Holy See make Baltimore a primatial see, which the Holy See declined to do. But, it appears that Archbishop Raymond Burke thinks he is the Primate of America given his penchant for criticizing the decisions of other American bishops, and doing so publicly.

Burke?s latest target is Cardinal Sean O?Malley, the archbishop of Boston who presided at the funeral for Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. In a speech in Washington (see Today's Briefing below [1]), the Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura said ?Neither Holy Communion nor funeral rites should be administered to such politicians. To deny these is not a judgment of the soul, but a recognition of the scandal and its effects.? Cardinal O?Malley does not follow Burke?s interpretation of Canon 915 about who should and should not be permitted to receive communion. And, he has ably explained his reasons for presiding at the funeral already.

I could understand if Archbishop Burke had voiced his concern about the provision of funeral rites *before* Cardinal O?Malley made his decision. I think Burke would be wrong, but he is entitled to his opinion. But, to speak out now, *after* the funeral is not simply bad form. The U.S. Bishops are polarized, and Cardinal George has issued a call for unity among the Episcopal bench. Burke?s statement is especially galling because he is not taking issue with a political strategy or anything tangential. His words strike at the confidence the Catholics of Boston should have in their archbishop.

Earlier this year, Archbishop Burke gave an interview to Randall Terry in which he cast similar aspersions against the pastoral judgment of Washington Archbishop Donald Wuerl. Within twenty-four hours, Burke issued an apology, an equivocal apology, but an apology nonetheless.

Archbishop Burke is not a blogger. He does not pen op-eds for the local paper. He is not even any longer a member of the USCCB. He is an official of the Holy See and nowhere in the job description for his Prefecture does it say that the occupant should offer freelance criticisms of his brother bishops. There is a scandal abrew alright, and it has nothing to do with Sen. Kennedy.

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