

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

October 14, 2010 at 8:31am

Papist Gets Rebuffed By CNS

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Thomas Peters, the infamous American Papist and Communications Director for Robbie George's American Principles Project, wants his toy back.

CNS has run an article about charges Peters made regarding the closure of Catholic hospitals. The charges turn out to be demonstrably false. On Monday, Peters trumpeted a story about Catholic hospitals in Scranton being sold to non-Catholic entrepreneurs because of 'Obamacare.' The article was in the *American Spectator*, the long-time house organ of the ranting right, one step away (if that) from John Birch Society-quality conspiracy theories, and hardly a reliable source for information. He used the article to try and help raise money for an organization that hosts his American papist blog and that wants to run ads against Democratic candidates in the Scranton area because, of course, Democrats are the root of all evil. Here was a great selling point: If it could be proven that the health care reform was causing Catholic hospitals to close, the true nefarious intent of 'Obamacare' would be exposed. Never mind that the hospitals in question had been in financial difficulties for years and had been negotiating, long before the vote on health care reform, with potential buyers.

If that was not enough, there was the evil one, Sr. Carol Keehan, CEO of the Catholic Health Association, pointing out that it would be difficult to ascribe the demise of the Catholic hospitals to a law that is still only in the initial stages of implementation and that the hospitals in Scranton had long been struggling. We all know, in Peters' worldview, that Sr. Carol would say anything and do anything to support Obama. And, we all know, in Peters' worldview, that Sr. Carol is disloyal to the bishops. He has the quotes to back it up, and goes on to cite a thoroughly discredited article from the Catholic News Agency, putting words in Cardinal George's mouth that Cardinal George has repeatedly said were not his words.

This is how the right-wing works these days. They feed off of bad reporting from news outfits that have

brazen ideological agendas and little regard for facticity. They devise conspiracy theories that bear no resemblance to the facts. They embellish quotes and, if need be, fabricate them, and then repeat the fabrications.

Of course, Peters does not confront the main point of the CNS article which is that the sale of the hospitals is not related to the health care reform law. He is too busy demonizing Sr. Carol and CNS. He is flabbergasted that CNS is, after all, run by the bishops. Like George Weigel reading papal encyclicals with his gold and red pens, deciding which passages deserve respect as magisterial teaching and which don't, Peters likes the bishops when they like him, but surely it is the work of Satan when the bishops' own news agency directly contradicts, with facts and quotes, assertions he made based on shoddy reporting at the Spectator.

Peters is all smoke and mirrors, the Catholic blogosphere's equivalent of Christine O'Donnell, a man possessed of clichés, slogans, misinformation and platitudes that he has mistaken for a worldview. He rants against Obama. He reproaches Sr. Carol. He regurgitates GOP talking points. If you like that sort of thing, he has a certain talent. Perhaps he should run for the Senate in Delaware someday.

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