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Bishops & The Poor

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

At his weekly blog, Cardinal Sean O'Malley writes about visiting a women's prison in the days leading up to Christmas. He spent time with each of the women in solitary confinement. I can scarcely think of someone who is in greater need of the Christmas message that God wants to come close to us than a prisoner in solitary confinement. I do not know I would have the emotional strength to make such a visit, but Cardinal Sean surely does.

In New York, Archbishop Timothy Dolan spent a part of his Christmas at a soup kitchen in the Bronx.

In Miami, Archbishop Thomas Wenski went to a detention center to celebrate Mass and, recalling the flight into Egypt, said, "That is why we can say that Jesus was an undocumented immigrant.... Christ was an illegal immigrant. He was a refugee." (White House and Congressional Hispanic Caucus, please take note of this powerful imagery!)

And, of course, the Holy Father had lunch at the Vatican for hundreds of homeless people from a shelter in Rome.

Of course, the Church also undertakes year-round efforts to help the poor through programs like the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, Catholic Charities and Catholic Relief Services, all of which are overseen by the bishops.

Our culture does not talk about poverty very much. The central socio-economic realities of our time are the rise in the poverty rate and growing income inequality, but it is tax cuts for the super-rich that get all the attention. Catholic journals condemn the DREAM Act which would help immigrants. The Acton Institute worships before the false god of democratic capitalism (which they always pronounce as if it were one word), forgetting that Mr. Fukuyama's prediction notwithstanding, history did not end in the 90s.

As the wicked old witch of the West says, "What a world, what a world." But, in that world, our bishops pretty consistently express the Church's solidarity with the poor and for that I am grateful. Humbled and grateful.
(h/t to Rocco)

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