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Catholic Dems Can't Take \"Yes\" For An Answer

Michael Sean Winters | Aug. 29, 2012 Distinctly Catholic

There is much that is troubling about the HuffPost item by Steve Krueger [1], president of the group Catholic Democrats. Like many Catholic Democrats who spent the six days between the announcement that Cardinal Dolan would give the benediction at the Republican National Convention and the news yesterday that he would also deliver the benediction at the Democratic National Convention complaining about the partisanship of Cardinal Dolan, Krueger now finds himself trying to explain his own carping and, unsurprisingly, his search for blame leads to Cardinal Dolan and not to himself and his fellow complainers.

First, there is the lack of historical awareness. He repeats the falsehood that there is something unprecedented about Dolan not defering to the local bishop, although in several instances in the past, non-local bishops have appeared at political conventions to offer the prayer. He also seems to forget that Cardinal George Mundelein and Msgr. John A. Ryan were not shy about endorsing Franklin Roosevelt, Mundelein implicitly and Ryan explicitly. If the Church is going to be in the public square, where she belongs, her leaders need to be careful, to be sure. They should not be absent.

Second, is any one else tired of the willingness of some people to drag the clergy sex abuse issue into every and all articles about the Catholic hierarchy? Non-germane.

Third, what is this about a "secret" meeting between Dolan and Romney. Last November, Dolan met "secretly" with President Obama, until yours truly broke the story. Perhaps Krueger wishes he could get a meeting with Dolan. His brutish prose explains why Dolan is well advised not to grant him one.

Fourth, the partisan divisions within the Catholic Church long pre-date the arrival of Timothy Dolan in the cathedra at St. Patrick's Cathedral. The real divisions date back to the 1970s, when too many Catholic Democrats refused to stand up to their party's emerging pro-choice orthodoxy and caved to pressure to abandon their support for the right-to-life. Kennedy, Muskie, Kucinich, all were once pro-life and all flipped. So did non-Catholics like Al Gore and Dick Gephardt. Ella Grasso, the Democratic Governor of my home state of Connecticut and the first woman to be elected governor of any state without succeeding her husband, she stood tall and refused to abandon the cause. Why couldn't the boys?

Fifth, if you want to know why liberals sometimes don't connect with working class voters anymore, perhaps phrases like "170 theologians and thought leaders" could explain it. What the hell is a "thought leader"?

NCR's editorial last week, written before the news broke that Dolan would also be leading prayer at the Democratic Convention, raised some thoughtful points, points that Krueger raises more crassly. The Church's involvement in politics is always an issue that needs tending and pruning. But, I think it speaks volumes about the person who Cardinal Dolan is, and his place in our culture at this moment, that it is unthinkable the Democrats would have declined his offer to offer the benediction at their convention. Krueger may not see this. He may not like it. But, I wish he would keep his carping to himself.

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[1] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steven-a-krueger/cardinal-dolan-should-keep-his-distance-from-tampa-and-charlotte_b_1836758.html