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More on Reyes Appointment

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Two items at the right-wing site "CatholicCulture.org" address the appointment of Jonathan Reyes to head the USCCB's Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development.

Phil Lawler can scarcely contain his excitement, both that John Carr is gone and Mr. Reyes is coming on board.

And Dr. Jeff Mirus likewise sees the change in earth-shattering terms.

Perhaps it should not astonish that both men besmirch the reputation of Mr. Carr suggesting that he was somehow less than fully Catholic, not committed to evangelization or even orthodoxy. "No longer is faithful Catholicism limited to the doctrine and pro-life committees," writes Mirus. Of course, the "committees" consist of bishops - does Mirus believe that the bishops who have served on and led the two committees Carr served were not faithful Catholics? Does Mirus think that Bishop Murphy and Bishop Blaire were less than faithful Catholics? And, anyone who thinks that the staff at the USCCB lead the bishops around by the nose has never paid attention to the dynamics of the conference. The staff at the USCCB, like the staff at any organization, can have great effect at the margins, but the dominant efforts and themes come from the bishops.

As I noted yesterday, those who worry that Carr's replacement is going to trash, or minimize, Catholic social teaching need to relax. Mr. Reyes will need to make it clear - a press release would be appropriate now - that Mr. Lawler and Dr. Mirus do not speak for him. But, at the end of the day, those of us who care about social justice have 120 years of explicit papal teaching on our side, to say nothing of the Gospels. By suggesting that the bishops had as their principal staffer a man who was somehow inattentive to the Gospels is outrageous. As someone who has come to know Carr, the suggestion is as offensive and wrong

as it is outrageous. John Carr has done more for the poor than almost anyone I can think of in DC these past twenty-five years. It is a legacy of which he, and the bishops he served, can be proud. The fact that Lawler and Mirus are so quick to trash that record says all we need to know about them. It is not incumbent upon the leadership of the USCCB, and especially Mr. Reyes, to separate themselves from these conservative cranks.

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