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Reader reacts to 'dove' label

John L. Allen Jr. | Aug. 4, 2006 All Things Catholic

On May 5, I wrote about differing attitudes in the Catholic Church towards Islam, pointing to remarks by Italian Senator Marcello Pera as illustrative of a "hawkish" approach, and testimony before the House International Relations Committee from Bishop Thomas Wenski of Orlando, Florida, who heads the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Policy, as more "dovish."

The item brought a response from John Carr, the veteran secretary of the Department of Social Justice and World Peace at the U.S. bishops' conference. Carr writes:

> *"I agree that a comprehensive Catholic approach to Islam must include elements of what you call the 'hawk' and 'dove' approaches. ... I hope you might take another look at the testimony [of Bishop Wenski] since it sought to reflect and express both approaches.*
>
> [It] clearly confronts the issue of the treatment of Christians in some Islamic countries. Bishop Wenski declares: 'In societies with growing militant Islamist influences there are often increases in intolerance and discrimination against religious minorities, including Christians ... This fact should not be denied or minimized.'
>
> The testimony notes that reciprocity is required. 'Reciprocity means, for example, that the Catholic Church expects support for efforts to permit the construction of Christian churches, schools and other religious institutions in Islamic countries, and expects countries with Christian majorities to allow the same for their Muslim minorities.'
>
> The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has been actively, consistently and persistently involved both in public and behind the scenes to protect the rights of Christians and others within several Muslim countries (in the Middle East, Africa and the Far East) and calling for greater attention and effective action on religious liberty. For example, no institution has been more deeply involved on the North-South conflict in Sudan, and religious liberty questions in Iraq. The USCCB played a decisive role in the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 and the establishment of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. We often address these issues in consultation and at the request of the affected local church and the Holy See.
>
> The USCCB is hardly a 'dove,' but rather is a strong defender of religious liberty, an advocate for reciprocity and is a voice for candid, principled and substantive dialogue."

The full text of Wenski's testimony before the House International Relations Committee in March is on the U.S. bishops' conference Web site:
http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/2006318drafttestimonyislamandchristianityfinal.pdf

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