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# EWTN & Immigration

Michael Sean Winters | May. 29, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

I was stunned the other night to see a replay of EWTN?s ?The World Over? that featured Sen. David Vitter of Louisiana talking about immigration reform. For a network that pledges itself to defending the Church?s teaching, the choice of Vitter seemed more than a little curious.

Of course, one never knows for sure what a guest will say on television, but in this case, the producers might have done a simple Goggle search to find out if Mr. Vitter?s views agreed with the repeated statements of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, recent popes, or the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The producers would have found that Vitter is one of the staunchest opponents of the Church?s explicit teaching on immigration they could have found.

Vitter considers the Gang of 8 proposal ?amnesty? and he is opposed to amnesty. He spoke on the Senate floor to articulate, maybe articulate is not the right word, his objections. He did not address the plight of families separated by divergent legal status and the consequent need to unite more families. He did not speak to the human rights of immigrants. He spoke a lot about the need for increased border security, as if that alone would solve the problems created by illegal immigration.

Vitter has voted against allowing undocumented workers to participate in Social Security, even though they most often pay into the system. He has voted against a guest worker program. He has supported building a fence along the southern border. He opposed a pathway to citizenship in the past and continues to oppose it, even for those who have a Green Card.

There was also a very specific vote Vitter has cast that you would think EWTN?s host, Raymond Arroyo, would have called to his attention and pressed him on. Vitter supported a law that required hospitals to learn the legal status of patients before seeking any government reimbursement of funds. Seeing as many hospitals are Catholic hospitals, this is a mandate that the Church violate its conscience rights by essentially snitching on people the Gospel call upon us to assist without reserve. There is a religious liberty issue here, at least that is how the USCCB put it when it filed an amicus brief in court opposing a similar Alabama law.

In case you think Vitter is motivated by some noble commitment to principle, even if the principle is wrong, you can think again. During his last campaign, he ran an ad against his opponent which said, ?Charlie Melancon. Thanks to him we might as well put out a welcome sign for illegal aliens.? Nice.

Alas, Arroyo hurled softballs at Vitter. The only really challenging moment came when Arroyo aired a television ad featuring Marco Rubio that highlighted all the conservative parts of the bill, and none of the more humane portions, and asked Vitter to comment. So the right hand got to duke it out with the far right hand. Arroyo also asked about a failed amendment that would have prohibited even state and local governments from providing welfare benefits to undocumented workers. I am not surprised that Arroyo sees no value in our nation?s welfare programs, but it was curious to see that the ?federalism? he usually champions evidently

doesn?t cut the mustard here if the possibility of keeping any kind of welfare benefit out of the hands of an undocumented worker exists.

Arroyo managed to ask about the USCCB?s support for the bill. ?As you know, this is not Church doctrine,? Vitter said. Really? Just a couple of weeks ago, Cardinal Timothy Dolan said on a conference call with reporters, ?This isn?t some wild left wing cause. This is classic Catholic teaching.? Arroyo let Vitter off the hook on his assertion. You know, prudential judgment and all that. Except, of course, Vitter is not arguing for a better way to help the immigrants at all, he is looking for ways to keep more of them out. This is not a difference of prudential judgment at all.

I admit that I enjoy some of EWTN?s programming. I like it when they cover the installation Masses of new bishops, their Sunday afternoon programs of concerts, especially the organ tours, that sort of thing. But, the idea that they are ?Catholic First? is questionable in the light of a decision to give someone like Vitter a platform on an issue of such central concern to the Church and her bishops at this moment. It would be one thing if Mr. Arroyo did not frequently have guests who chastise others who disagree with the Church on this issue or that, hurling accusation of ?Catholic Lite? at them.

I do not believe that Arroyo is a ?Catholic Lite? kind of fellow. Nor Sen. Vitter for that matter, although I think Vitter is wrong on immigration. Still, it is stunning that a show so closely identified with the Church would give a platform to someone who opposed a cardinal policy initiative of the Church at precisely this moment when the issue is ripe. I encourage our friends at EWTN to host a prominent proponent of immigration reform on this week?s show. Perhaps they can get an interview with Sr. Simone Campbell, whose Nuns on the Bus tour begins today.

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