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One Thumb Up, One Thumb Down

Michael Sean Winters | Jun. 20, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

Writing at CatholicMoralTheology.com, [1] John Berkman gets a thumbs up for sharing this story about his recent appearance on a panel before the U.S. bishops at their meeting in San Diego:

One Archbishop asked a question that I did not expect and really appreciated. He noted that Bishops are called upon by their office to act as teachers. However, he noted that some of the panelists are ?natural? teachers as parent, called to teach their children. He asked for insight from the ?natural teachers? on the panel to give insight to them as to how they might function well as teachers by office. It felt rather odd to speak about my ?teaching? relationship with my three year old daughter Emily and my five year old son Will and provide examples of teaching ? mostly advocating the Montessori method that sometimes they can only learn by experiencing and learning from the natural consequences of their actions ? but I was deeply appreciative of the question.

I wish more bishops would ask more parents what it is like to teach!

But, Berkman gets a thumbs down for a tendentious reading of the proposed HHS contraception mandate. He writes: "In light of the imminently forthcoming final version of the HHS guidelines (which is likely to continue to mandate that Catholic institutions must pay for health care plans that include funding for contraceptive and abortifacient devices and drugs, and for direct sterilization of women)..." This is not true. Indeed, the proposed regulation expressly forbids the insurance company from making the Catholic institution pay for the controversial coverage. Here is the actual text of the rule:

The issuer providing the individual market excepted benefits policy may not impose any cost sharing requirement (such as a copayment, coinsurance, or a deductible) with respect to coverage of those services, or impose any premium, fee, or other charge, or portion thereof, directly or indirectly, on the eligible organization, its group health plan, or plan participants or beneficiaries with respect to coverage of those services. (45 CFR 147.131(c)(2)

A moral theologian needs to understand the facts of the case before assessing what constitutes licit, versus illicit, cooperation. So, a mixed verdict on Professor Berkman's commentary. Even good guys, and I am told Berkman is a good guy, need to get their facts right.

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Links:
[1] http://catholicmoraltheology.com/the-hhs-controversy-and-the-principle-of-cooperation-at-the-us-bishops-meeting-in-san-diego/