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Fr. Dwight vs. Cardinal Oscar

Michael Sean Winters | Nov. 8, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

A little over a month ago, I had never heard of Fr. Dwight Longenecker. But, when he viciously attacked [1] a young woman's article, an article I had also criticized [2] but tried to criticize with some measure of charity, I made Longenecker's unhappy, albeit electronic, acquaintance. I had, and have, no desire to get involved in an on-going vet of his particular brand of vitriol. Better to put pins in one's eyes. But, RealClearReligion linked to an essay he composed [3] in which he attacks Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez's speech in Dallas, a speech which I commended to readers [4]as the kind of evangelizing speech we need more of, and one that is completely in sync with the Holy Father's vision for the Church. You can read Fr. Longenecker's diatribe against Cardinal Oscar in its entirety here [3]. But, to give you a foretaste, and warn you to have some antacids ready if you endeavor to read the whole, he quotes a passage from Cardinal Rodriguez's talk that I also cited. Cardinal Rodriguez said:

And there the Church, in humble company, helps making life intelligible and dignified, making it a community of equals, without castes or classes; without rich or poor; without impositions or anathemas. Her foremost goal is to care for the penultimate (hunger, housing, clothing, shoes, health, education?) to be then able to care for the ultimate, those problems that rob us of sleep after work (our finiteness, our solitude before death, the meaning of life, pain, and evil?). The answer the Church gives to the ?penultimate? will entitle her to speak about the ?ultimate.? For that reason, the Church must show herself as a Samaritan on earth ?so she can some day partake of the eternal goods.

This is beautiful, yes? Not to Fr. Longenecker, who writes:

Really? The Church?s foremost goal is to provide housing, shoes, health and education? Surely the church?s foremost goal is the salvation of souls. To be sure we must be engaged in feeding the poor, but in his talk on the New Evangelization the Cardinal does not mention the salvation of souls or the spiritual work of the church or the sacraments at all. Is he simply a social worker dressed in red, and does the red indicate more of his political opinion than his status as a cardinal?

It is doubtful that Longenecker is unfamiliar with the word "penultimate." But, really, to call Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez, a man who has toiled in one of the poorest archdiocese in the world for decades a "social worker dressed in red," is that necessary? Is it appropriate coming from a priest? I am not hesitant to criticize bishops and cardinals when I think they err. I am a blogger. Fr. Longenecker is a priest who blogs and his words, his perpetual angriness, and his tendentious readings of others' words, raise serious questions about his suitability for ministry.

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[1] http://www.patheos.com/blogs/standingonmyhead/2013/10/todd-unctuous-has-competition.html
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