

Dolan on poor church for the poor

Thomas Reese | Nov. 11, 2013 NCR Today
Fall bishops' meeting 2013

Cardinal Timothy Dolan endorsed Pope Francis' "Poor church for the poor," but said that the U.S. bishops don't have to do anything new.

The cardinal, who is president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops until the end of their meeting this week in Baltimore, was responding to questions about why the bishops were not doing more about the poor. He said that as president most of the complaint letters he received were from people complaining that the bishops talked too much about social justice, government cut backs, and the poor.

The cardinal noted that "different popes put a spotlight on different issues in the church, and certainly Pope Francis, thanks be to God, has put a spotlight on injustice and needs of the poor, and a ringing call for the church to be poor and for the poor."

What Cardinal Dolan disagreed with is "the interpretation that the (bishops') conference has been less than concerned about the poor." The cardinal argued that this has been a constant concern of the conference since its founding in 1917. But there is no doubt, he said, that the pope is "asking us to be even more vigorous in an area that we already have a pretty good track record on."

When asked by David Gibson of RNS what concrete action the bishops might take in response to the pope's new emphasis, Cardinal Dolan said, "I don't think we have to add anything." He pointed to the reports given to the conference on its work in Haiti, on immigration, on the "Circle of Concern," on the budget cuts, on the farm bill, on foreign aid, on protection of minorities, on protection of the baby in the womb, on the education of poor people, on care for our elders, etc.

"Can I think of anything new?" he asked. "I don't think so. I like to think that this is an affirmation of the good things we are doing." He said the bishops try to "resist the temptation to think that the answer to everything is a document, a committee, and a second collection." Rather "we should put on the glasses of 'a poor church for the poor.'"

The bishops have been criticized for not emphasizing the needs of the poor as much as they oppose abortion, gay marriage, and the contraception mandate in the Affordable Care Act.

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a senior analyst for NCR. His email address is treesesj@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: @ThomasReeseSJ.]

Source URL (retrieved on 07/25/2017 - 17:50): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/dolan-poor-church-poor>