

MSW versus LifeSiteNews

Michael Sean Winters | Aug. 3, 2012 Distinctly Catholic

I was planning on taking the day off today. I drove up last night with the three beasts but with traffic leaving DC, what is normally a six hour drive turned into seven and one-half hours, and we did not arrive until a half hour past midnight. Besides, I almost never take a day off.

But, I see that [Steve Jalsevac, the managing director of LifeSiteNews, has responded to my post](#) [1] yesterday about their article concerning the Al Smith dinner and while I do not normally respond to comments, an official response from the organization I chastised requires an acknowledgement.

Mr. Jalsevac starts by insisting that their article was not an attack on Cardinal Dolan, that the article was "a news article, not a rant?" a straight report.? So, LifeSiteNews reports that Cardinal Dolan has issued an invitation to President Obama and Governor Romney to attend the annual Al Smith dinner, and then LifeSiteNews provides paragraph after paragraph of comments about why this is a bad idea, or, as Michael Hichborn of the American Life League, an "unthinkable" one. Cardinal Dolan is a learned man who does not do "unthinkable" things. To suggest otherwise, to my mind, constitutes an attack.

As for the question of the LifeSiteNews article being a "straight report," generally, as I understand the canons of reportage, it is important to solicit opposing view points on any issue an article's author has defined as "controversial" as the LifeSiteNews article so defines the invitation to President Obama. If it is a controversy, might not a "straight report" want to provide both sides, or as sometimes happens, five sides, of that controversy, instead of simply providing one side? My columns here are opinion journalism, which operates slightly differently. Of course, I must get my facts right as all journalists must, and I think I have an obligation, one I undoubtedly fail to meet at times, to render opposing views without distorting them. But, if I am called upon to do a "straight report," a news item, then I have to keep my opinions far from the text and find any and all relevant and significant points of view on the subject. If the LifeSiteNews article in question is a "straight report," then Liberace was a straight pianist.

Mr. Jalsevac also hurls some invective at NCR, saying "publications like yourselves [sic] genuinely do rant on and on against Church doctrines, disciplines and prelates." I have never ranted about a Church doctrine except in its favor, nor against any discipline of the Church. Never. I have ranted against a couple of prelates, but dang it, some of them deserve it.

But, Mr. Jalsevac's fundamental claim is that I am mistaken in my charge that LifeSiteNews and the groups and people they quote are trying to exercise a parallel magisterium, one that insists on a standard of behavior and speech regarding abortion, and only abortion, and apply it to the rest of the Church under pain of being considered a Catholic In Name Only or somehow insufficiently committed to the pro-life cause. LifeSiteNews is to the pro-life cause what Grover Norquist is to tax policy, an example of extremists who, like most extremists and all heretics, take one truth and one truth only, and let it run amok. I agree with them ? and I am sure Cardinal Dolan agrees with them ? that abortion is a monstrous crime and a grave sin. I am often frustrated that I cannot make others in our society see that fact. But, I know one thing for sure. The tactics and the intellectual stance of those like LifeSiteNews and the American Life League harm the pro-life cause.

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