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In light of Pope Francis' interview, where are the bishops?

Mary Ann McGivern | Sep. 24, 2013 The Francis Chronicles

I read the *America* magazine interview [1] by Jesuit Fr. Antonio Spadaro with Pope Francis with joy. There is so much in it to ponder and appreciate, yet the writing flows easily. But as I read, I wondered yet again, "Where are the U.S. bishops?"

The House Republicans, many of them energetically supported by our bishops, voted in a bloc to cut food stamps to stop waste, fraud and abuse. These same legislators favor a farm bill that increases crop insurance schemes derided for their multimillion-dollar chicanery.

Where are the bishops opposing this theft of food from the mouths of the poor?

Near the end of Pope Francis' interview, he refers to a letter by Jesuit Fr. Pedro Arupe that says one cannot speak of poverty if one does not experience poverty with direct connection to the places in which there is poverty. Perhaps the reason American bishops don't speak of poverty is that they are absent from the barren inner city, the suburban slums and rural misery, not to mention the destitution of distant lands. For example, the last bishops to visit the St. Louis Catholic Worker were Archbishop John May and Bishop Edward Braxton. I don't know where the recent bishops have been or where among the poor our other bishops have gone, but I don't see them at the public health clinics or walking out with the fast-food workers or at the food stamp offices.

A new ecclesiastical fashion is to deny Catholic Campaign for Human Development funds to groups who work directly with the poor and also are members of statewide justice coalitions alongside, say, a rights group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. To me, this is an illustration of the Holy Father's point that "the church's pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently."

Pope Francis goes on to describe a proclamation of the faith in a missionary style, focusing on the essentials that make the heart burn, as it did for the disciples at Emmaus. My heart burns just imagining that proclamation.

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