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Burke: Pope should highlight abortion, didn't write officially on capitalism

Joshua J. McElwee | Dec. 16, 2013 NCR Today

Cardinal Raymond Burke, an influential Catholic prelate who until Monday served on the Vatican congregation advising Pope Francis on who to appoint as bishops around the world, has said in an interview he does not understand why the pope does not focus more on opposing abortion.

Burke, an American who still serves as the head of the Vatican's highest court, also said in an EWTN interview he does not think Francis' recent apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* ("The Joy of the Gospel") can be considered official teaching of the church.

The exhortation, Burke told Raymond Arroyo in an interview last Thursday, is "not altogether easy to interpret."

Responding to a question from Arroyo about whether priests should focus on abortion, Burke responds, "what could be more essential than the natural moral law?"

"One gets the impression, or it?s interpreted this way in the media, that [the pope] thinks we?re talking too much about abortion, too much about the integrity of marriage as between one man and one woman," the cardinal continues. "But we can never talk enough about that."

"It?s literally a massacre of the unborn," Burke states. "We can never talk enough about that, because if we don?t get this straight, that human life, innocent and defenseless human life is an inviolable dignity, how are we going to understand anything else correctly with regard to care of the sick or whatever it might be?"

Burke, who previously served as the archbishop of St. Louis, is the prefect of the Vatican's Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the highest judicial authority in the church besides the pope. While he has also served as a member of the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops since 2009, Pope Francis terminated his appointment to that congregation on Monday [1].

Members of the Congregation for Bishops are responsible for vetting and recommending bishop candidates to the pope for appointment throughout the world. Among cases heard by the Signatura are disputes in jurisdiction between Vatican offices and appeals from individuals for a new judgment on issues affecting their canonical status in the church.

In the interview Thursday, Burke also responds to a question from Arroyo about Francis' remarks in the exhortation criticizing some forms of capitalism.

Burke calls the exhortation a "distinct kind of document" and says "I haven't quite figured out in my mind exactly ... how to describe it."

"I would not think that, I don?t think it was intended to be part of papal magisterium," Burke states. "At least that?s my impression of it."

Burke also states that there "is a kind of unpredictability about life in the Rome in these days" following the

resignation of Pope Benedict XVI in February.

"It seems to be a question of a certain style, and every Holy Father is different," he states. "So it is quite distinct from Pope Benedict who was, who attended very much to a certain protocol, and also to a certain discipline of schedule and so forth, so there is an element of that, that?s clear."

Burke's full interview with Arroyo is available on YouTube [2]. A partial transcript of their exchange has been made available [3] by the popular blog PrayTell.

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