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## **Oppose health care if you like, but do it honestly**

by Michael Sean Winters

NCR Today

It is one thing for conservative Catholics to ignore the Pope's recent encyclical calling for more not less social justice when they denounce the different proposals for health care reform. And, it is another thing when they ignore the bishops' statements supporting health care reform. But, it is quite another when they simply distort the truth and claim the mantle of the faith for their efforts.

In an interview with Katie Couric earlier this month, President Obama acknowledged quite clearly that he was not seeking to use health care reform to change the nation's status quo on abortion funding. "I'm pro-choice, but I think we also have the tradition in this town, historically, of not financing abortions as part of government-funded health care," the president said. "My main focus is making sure that people have options of high quality care at the lowest possible price." Catholic News Agency failed to run a news item about this seemingly important news for the pro-life community. They did run a tendentious opinion piece by a Father Thomas Berg that completely mischaracterized what the President said and misunderstood the import of his remarks on the legislation still working its way through Congress.

Father Berg is not alone in using alarmist language that misrepresents the current debate. He refers to "the House bill" when in fact there are several House bills. Other conservative websites refer to "Obama's health plan" but the president has not put any concrete plan on the table but has instead let Congress draft the legislation which several committees are doing. By labeling these bills "Obama's health care plan" and suggesting that they are all going to require government funding of abortion is disingenuous at best.

Yes, those of us in the pro-life community must keep Congress and the White House aware of our concerns about any effort to sneak around the Hyde Amendment which forbids the use of federal funds for abortion. But, conservative Catholic commentators are no more entitled to their own facts than they are to their own magisterium. They should pay better attention to both.

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