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'KC bishops undermining US bishops'

by Thomas C. Fox

NCR Today

Michael Sean Winters, who writes in the space regularly, has posted an interesting analysis of the joint pastoral letter on health care reform issued this week by Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas and Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City, Missouri.

Writes Winters, referring to a question posed in an NCR editorial yesterday:

"The most interesting question posed by this document is not who speaks for the bishops but whether or not the USCCB should bother to do its work if it is merely going to be undermined by some bishops who disagree with the proposals adopted by their brothers. ...

Archbishop Naumann and Bishop Finn have unwittingly undermined their brother bishops in two ways. First, it appears to the average reader of the news that the U.S. bishops are divided about health care, and this at a critical moment in the negotiations with the administration and congressional leadership, negotiations that are delicate and can easily be de-railed when outliers throw a wrench into the works. Second, it appears to the average reader of the news that the long tradition of consensus and collegiality by the American episcopate is threatened by a small group of bishops who appear more intent on achieving ideological victories than in preserving the ecclesiological unity of the various local churches in the United States.

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