ACLU Takes On Catholic Hospitals

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

One of the articles cited in this morning?s ?Morning Briefing? is exceedingly important and will be with us for a long time. The ACLU is mounting an effort to force Catholic hospitals to perform abortions in certain cases and provide other forms of care that violate the Church?s ethical norms.

As I mention in my post this morning about the Church and the media, the ACLU stood with the Catholic Church when it sought an exemption from the requirement that it provide marital benefits to same-sex couples, arguing that the Church had a First Amendment right not to recognize such unions. Here, the argument is that because the Church?s hospitals receive federal funds, they should be forced to perform legal procedures sought by their patients, even if those procedures violate the Church?s ethical standards. Sister Carol Keehan rebutted the ACLU, pointing out that a few cases where the desires of the patient and the standards of the hospital came into conflict should not be allowed to denigrate all the work on behalf of women that Catholic hospitals provide day-in and day-out. As always, Sr. Carol?s voice is the voice of reason.

The First Amendment issues involved are vital here, and I will be tossing them over in my mind today, soliciting the advice of those more learned in the law than myself, and writing on this tomorrow as well. I know that the ACLU is wrong, but the ACLU is often wrong. Even when they are wrong, however, they often serve a public service, defending albeit extremely, the rights that we all enjoy. Here, I think they are not pursuing any conceivable public service, so I am somewhat surprised that they have chosen to pick this fight.

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