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Boston's Anonymous Bloggers

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Yesterday, the Boston Globe ran an article about two websites run by conservative Catholics in Boston that have made a habit of trying to "expose" what they believe are problems with the management of the archdiocese. The strangest thing about these two sites is that they are run anonymously, the articles and comments are unsigned.

In my experience, anonymous commentators are not worth responding to because the people who post items but refuse to put their names to them are cowards. This is especially the case when, as here, the two websites launch outrageous claims and vitriolic attacks on loyal sons and daughters of the Church, such as Father Bryan Hehir, who has done so much to advance the cause of religion in Boston and the nation as a scholar and expert in the area of social justice. Catholics are entitled to disagree with Father Hehir, of course, but his speeches and papers are so thoroughly researched, so filled with his lifetime of learning, to dispute the facts would take work, and the anonymous cowards at these websites so not seem interested in hard work. Ranting is easy. Research is tough.

I also like the large claims they make for themselves. One "open letter" to Cardinal O'Malley and the leadership of the archdiocese begins, "We write to you on behalf of thousands of people in the Archdiocese?? Thousands? They note that their website has been visited by more than 20,000 people but my hunch is that they got 20,000 "hits," many from the same people, and many from people like me who make it our business to police the crazies. They do not speak for me. Besides, the fact that someone goes to my blog does not entitle me to assume that I can, therefore, "speak for them."

What is in the water in Boston? I had an encounter with a man from Boston, someone from the opposite end of the ideological spectrum. When I suggested that Cardinal O'Malley was a fine bishop, that I had had occasion to meet with him and always found him receptive and honest, even when we disagreed, this

man launched into a diatribe about how the Cardinal would not meet with him and insisted ? insisted mind you ? that I arrange a meeting. I had to bite my tongue from saying, ?I wouldn't meet with you either ? you're obnoxious.? In fact, the Cardinal did meet with members of the group Voice of the Faithful to listen to their concerns. I am sure he would meet with the people who write these websites ? if they would stand up and identify themselves.

I hate to even write about these nasty anonymous bloggers. And, I do not see why the Globe saw the necessity of doing so. But, now that they have broken through into the mainstream, their charges must be answered. The answer is: Ignore them.

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