

CACG Returns

Michael Sean Winters | Oct. 20, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good sent an email to its board members yesterday, announcing that this week they will launch a new website, the first step in a planned rejuvenation of the organization. The new website will feature a "Common Good Forum" with articles from a host of prominent Catholics.

CACG has been relatively quiet since it played a vital role in the passage of health care reform, one of a number of religiously motivated groups that joined the effort to garner the final votes to secure passage of the landmark legislation. In the email to the Board and Advisory Council members, Fred Rotondaro, Board Chair, recalled the work CACG had undertaken on behalf of environmental issues, immigration reform, anti-poverty efforts and its signature efforts for health care reform. "We also all surely agree that our country remains at a critical juncture where the voice of the Alliance should be clear and loud," Rotondaro wrote in the email.

The Common Good Forum will begin with a commentary from Rev. Bill Byron, S.J., former president of the Catholic University of America, and currently a professor at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. Future contributors will include Sr. Simone Campbell, Archbishop Silvio Tomasi, John Podesta, Eric LeCompt, Ambassador Thomas Melady, Sharon Hersch, Scott Pilarz, S.J., among others. The new website also has an introduction by CUA Professor Stephen Schneck, who will be serving on CACG's Board and Editorial Committee.

In addition to the Common Good Forum, the new website will have a "Must Reads" column, with links to articles of interest to the members. In the future, the group plans to have book recommendations and other on-line features.

CACG was formed in the wake of the 2004 election when many progressive Catholics were repulsed by the way some Catholics had attacked Sen. John Kerry during his campaign for the presidency. It is ironic that CACG's relaunch comes on the same day that Pope Benedict XVI announced that former St. Louis Archbishop Raymond Burke will be made a cardinal at the next consistory. Cardinal-designate Burke was one of the Catholic prelates who said they would refuse communion to Sen. Kerry within their jurisdictions, a position held by a small minority of the American bishops. (I will have a comment on Burke's elevation to the cardinalate later this morning.)

I am aware that CACG has been controversial. Some prelates objected to their support for the health care bill, a bill the bishops opposed. But, there is a clear need for progressive Catholic voices in the public square — as there is for conservative Catholic voices! There are groups involved in grassroots organizing, like Catholics United. There are groups concerned with Church reform. But, D.C. needs a progressive group that gives voice to our traditional Catholic social teaching and tries to apply those teachings to the contemporary political debate. At a time when polling shows that white Catholics are leaning towards a Republican Party that has been taken over by a Tea Party movement that could not be more antithetical to Catholic beliefs about society, justice and the role of government, CACG's return to the public square is especially timely.

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