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Silk on Obama and RC's

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Over at Spiritual Politics, Mark Silk notes the new members of the Obama Administration's Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership Office's Advisory Council. Amongst other problems, Silk notes that the Obama administration has dropped the ball on dealing with the Catholic hierarchy: "If the Obama White House can't round up a single Catholic bishop for this Council, it should be ashamed of itself. (Indeed, the administration's inability to establish decent relations with the Catholic hierarchy represents its single biggest faith-based failure.)"

The fault is not only with Obama. Two weeks ago, at the State of the Union, newly installed House Speaker John Boehner had Cardinal Wuerl in his box. I do not recall Speaker Pelosi ever having a prominent - or a not prominent - Catholic clergyman as her guest at the State of the Union.

It is good that the Obama Faith-Based Office named Sr. Marlene Weisenbeck of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, but they need to place someone from the hierarchy on their board. As Silk notes, the Faith-Based Office has done good work, taking a Bush-initiative that had never quite found its bearings and making it work better, more fairly, and in ways that remove the considerations of government assistance from partisan politics. But, they need to do more than preach to the choir. They need to bring some of those who do not already agree with them into their counsels and, as Silk writes, they should start with an RC bishop.

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