

Bishops' add Catholic Clarity to Budget Debate

Joe Feuerherd | Apr. 14, 2011 NCR Today

“The needs of those who are hungry and homeless, without work or in poverty should come first.”

***April 13 Letter [1]** from Bishops Howard Hubbard, Chair, US Bishops Committee on International Justice and Peace and Stephen Blaire, Chair, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development to Members of the US House of Representatives*

Add Blaire-Hubbard to the cacophony of proposals and voices ? Obama, Ryan, Simpson-Bowles, etc. ?in the nearly-impossible-to-keep-track-of-budget-debates.

Blaire is the bishop of Stockton, CA, Hubbard the bishop of Albany, NY. For those looking for a Catholic touchstone on how best to view the confusing budget spectacle, the US Catholic Bishops through a two-page Blaire-Hubbard letter, offer a clear and concise presentation of the stakes.

The bishops deserve credit, for clarity and concision have not been the hallmark of the budget/deficit/national debt discussions.

1. Every budget decision should be assessed by whether it protects or threatens human life and dignity.
2. A central moral measure of any budget proposal is how it affects ?the least of these? (Matthew 25). The needs of those who are hungry and homeless, without work or in poverty should come first.
3. Government and other institutions have a shared responsibility to promote the common good of all, especially ordinary workers and families who struggle to live in dignity in difficult economic times.?

Further, they continue, ?A just framework for future budgets cannot rely on disproportionate cuts in essential services to poor persons. It requires shared sacrifice by all, including raising adequate revenues [emphasis added], eliminating unnecessary military and other spending, and addressing the long-term costs of health insurance and retirement programs fairly.?

Is the Blaire-Hubbard call for ?raising adequate revenues? in the context of ?shared sacrifice by all? an endorsement of a tax increase on the very wealthy? Though these federal budget discussions can be parsed six ways till Sunday, it sure sounds like it to me.

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[1] <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/2012-Budget-Letter-to-House-04-13-11.pdf>