

Time for Civil Disobedience?

Michael Sean Winters | Jan. 25, 2012 | Distinctly Catholic

In 2006, [Cardinal Roger Mahony, the most prominent carrier of the social justice tradition of Cardinal Bernardin, said that he would call upon his flock to practice civil disobedience](#) [1] in the face of a proposed law that would have banned Catholic charities from assisting undocumented workers. Mahony rightly invoked the right of the Church to pursue its Gospel-mandated ministries without interference from the State.

Mahony delivered a sharp rebuke to the Obama administration following last week's announcement that it refused to enlarge the conscience exemption from HHS mandated health insurance coverage of procedures the Church opposes.

So, I offer a modest proposal. The U.S. cardinals should pick a day and, with the support of like-minded clerics from other religious traditions, come to Washington and chain themselves to the White House fence, get arrested, and bring further attention to the issue of religious liberty. Civil disobedience by clergy has a proud tradition, including Dr. King's protests against segregation and the countless clergy who engaged in civil disobedience to protest the Vietnam War. The cardinals might wish to choose the Feast of St. Thomas More, June 22, to make their point although that would give the event a distinctly Catholic flavor. Or they might choose a secular anniversary, say, August 21, which was the day in 1789 that the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Bill of Rights.

You will note that the link above to the story about Cardinal Mahony's 2006 call for civil disobedience brings you to an editorial by the New York Times. Then, the Times applauded Mahony. Will they have the courage of their commitment to the First Amendment again?

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Links:

[1] <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/03/opinion/03fri1.html>