Boehner's Intro of +Dolan

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Few Americans got to watch Cardinal Timothy Dolan?s benediction at last night?s GOP convention. I found it curious that the stage was cleared of the Romney and Ryan clans before Dolan was brought out to offer his prayer: Why wouldn?t the Republican nominees want that photo op?

Dolan was introduced by Speaker John Boehner. In his introduction, Boehner said this: ?He?s a man who knows that the preferential option for the poor doesn?t translate into a preferential option for big government.? I would not object if Boehner had added an adverb like ?always? or ?necessarily.? But, the absence of such a qualification makes Cardinal Dolan seem like an anti-government Tea Partier, and I don?t think that is the case. Indeed, the Church?s social magisterium is quite clear that government and politics are noble vocations, which may be the single most counter-cultural stance the Church currently takes! Of course, government programs cannot replace personal charity. Of course, communities and labor unions and the K of C are often better at solving some problems than a government program. But, when a fundamental human right, is concerned, be it the right to life or the right to health care, Cardinal Dolan and more than 120 years of explicit papal teaching are clear: We need as much government as necessary to guarantee those fundamental rights.

It is not uncommon to hear bishops chastise Democrats who mischaracterize Church teaching, and I have no problem with them doing so. If you claim to be speaking for the Church, you should know what you are saying. But, Speaker Boehner?s comment also mischaracterizes Church teaching, and by attributing the thought to Cardinal Dolan so explicitly, I think Boehner crossed a line.

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