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Bp Flores on Religious Liberty

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Distinctly Catholic

Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, delivered the Steele Lecture in Houston last week and he has now posted the text on his blog. (h/t to Rocco for the link.) Bishop Flores looks at both the HHS mandate and the attempts by several states to limit the Church's ability to serve immigrants, and notes the varied, partisan responses this has caused. I think +Flores is a bit too sunny about the American founding, reading back into their minds some ideas about what we would come to call subsidiarity in the late nineteenth century. The American founders were also deeply hostile to Catholic understandings of such key words as "freedom" and "conscience." Still, +Flores demonstrates a deft and deep thoughtfulness in this lecture, and shows why he is rightly considered one of the rising stars of the US episcopate. For me, the money quote is this:

These varied political and media reactions to our position should hardly surprise anyone. I simply point out that we talk about the common good in a culture where our interlocutors in public policy are engaged in a race to create a consensus about the popular good. The popular good and the common good are two different notions. The popular good can be described as the will moving unconsidered reason to judgment, while the common good is reason moving the will to a well considered good. Perceptions of the popular good can change radically fairly quickly. It just takes a good campaign. The Common good does not change radically, what it needs is a lamp-post upon which to stand. It has its own innate persuasive power. The good and the true do have a way of speaking for themselves.

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