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US bishop responds to pope regarding abortion language

by Joshua J. McElwee

The Francis Chronicles

The U.S. Catholic bishop who grabbed headlines when he said he was "disappointed" Pope Francis had not spoken more about abortion now says he is "grateful" to the pope for widening the vision of the church.

Providence, R.I., Bishop Thomas Tobin made his newest remarks in a statement Friday, one day after Jesuit publications around the world published an exclusive interview with the pontiff, who said he felt "reprimanded" by some in the church.

"Being a Catholic does not mean having to choose between doctrine and charity, between truth and love," Tobin writes in the statement. "It includes both. We are grateful to Pope Francis for reminding us of that vision."

Earlier, in a Sept. 12 story in his diocesan newspaper, Tobin expressed his disappointment in Francis.

"I'm a little bit disappointed in Pope Francis that he hasn't, at least that I'm aware of, said much about unborn children, about abortion, and many people have noticed that," Tobin said then. I think it would be very helpful if Pope Francis would address more directly the evil of abortion and to encourage those who are involved in the pro-life movement."

In the interview released Thursday, the pope said "we cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods. I have not spoken much about these things, and I was reprimanded for that."

"It is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time," Francis continues, "especially because the teaching of the church on these matters is already clear."

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