

+Chaput Claims He Did Not Criticize Pope Francis

Michael Sean Winters | Nov. 14, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

[In this interview at Philly.com](#) [1], Archbishop Charles Chaput protests that he was never criticizing Pope Francis, simply repeating concerns others have raised. "That is the fact. I've never been critical of the Holy Father and would never speak ill of him," +Chaput said. This would seem to challenge my assertion that if the nuncio wants to know how many bishops are less than thrilled with Pope Francis, he only has to look at +Chaput's vote total in the contest for VP of the conference. I say "seem" because in other comments, in the same interview, +Chaput displays, shall we say, something less than enthusiasm for Pope Francis.

"We should look at him after a year, rather than trying to size him up at each speech," +Chaput said. Again, is it a bishop's job to "size up" the pope? More bothersome was this comment. "Francis keeps saying he's a son of the Church, which means he is not going to abandon the Church's teaching." This put me in mind of those conservative Republicans who did not want to identify with the birther movement, but did not want to alienate them either. Instead of saying, "The President was born in Hawaii," they would say, "The President says he was born in Hawaii." The acknowledgement is grudging, skeptical. Why can't Archbishop Chaput just say, "I think this pope is great!" Instead, he is reserving judgment, as if judgment was his to pass, taking the pope "at his word" to re-assure the faithful, as if anyone sane doubted it, that the pope would not "abandon" the teachings of the Church.

I stick by my claim: 87 bishops voted for +Chaput and that is the number of bishops who are something less than excited with the new pope. This breaks my heart, not because it shows divisions within the Church. I recall the comment of Archbishop John Ireland on the 1903 conclave that elected Cardinal Giuseppe Sarto as Pope Pius X. +Ireland had wanted his good friend Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli or Cardinal Mariano Rampolla, the Secretary of State under Leo XIII. Upon Sarto's election, Cardinal James Gibbons, the first American to vote in a conclave, cabled to +Ireland: "Pope man of God." +Ireland then wrote to his good friend Denis O'Connell, that Rampolla or Vannutelli "would have done me for 'a man of God.'" So, there is a history to this sort of thing. No, my heart is broken because apparently many bishops cannot see what the average man on the street can see, that this pope has, in a very short time, brought a new burst of life and enthusiasm to the Church, that, as Cardinal Sean O'Malley told my colleague John Allen, "it's so obvious the Holy Spirit gave us the right man." It is obvious to me. Why is it so not obvious to such a large number of American bishops? The question is not rhetorical.

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