

The Conservative Economic Conundrums

Michael Sean Winters | Feb. 10, 2014 Distinctly Catholic

I came across [this article at National Catholic Register](#) [1] by Andrew Abela, the new dean of Catholic University's Business School, analyzing Pope Francis' exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. Abela, whom I know slightly, discusses problems when markets fall short of what the Pope is calling for and he writes this:

The second [example of ideology trumping ethics] is a phenomenon that economist Andy Yuengert of Pepperdine University calls "the market made me do it." Business leaders will sometimes take actions that are inconsistent with human decency, such as paying very low wages, and claim that they were forced into such actions because of the competitive realities of the market. While this can sometimes be the case, at other times, it is a cop-out, reflecting a lack of imagination on the part of management.

Some can be so completely captivated by the ideology of the absolute autonomy of markets that it never even occurs to them to look for alternative options; they only do what the market "makes" them do. A more principled approach in this case, one that a number of firms have taken, is to find ways to help employees develop their skills to increase their productivity and substantiate higher wages.

The question is obvious: When he states "this can sometimes be the case" regarding paying low wages, that is to say, when it is not a cop out, what remedy exists besides government intervention? Does Abela approve such intervention? To what degree? Does he support a living wage?

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Links:

[1] <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/the-economic-message-of-pope-francis-evangelii-gaudium/>