

Disconnect between social doctrine, political practice

Stockton Bishop Stephen Blaire recently expressed concern about some national groups in the church turning the issue of religious liberty into a political fight and about Rep. Paul Ryan's federal budget curbing increased government spending on welfare programs. Meanwhile, Stockton, Calif., has one of the highest crime rates in America and is near bankruptcy because it cannot meet commitments to government union employees retired on generous pension plans.

Bishops need to teach church social doctrine as "an integral and solidary humanism" and the laity needs to translate that doctrine into political action. The mangled manner in which some highly visible left-leaning Catholic politicians have put that doctrine into practice makes me wonder how well some American bishops have been doing their job.

I notice that concerns for the next World Synod of Bishops include "a weakening of faith in Christian communities, a diminished regard for the authority of the magisterium, an individualistic approach to belonging to the church, a decline in religious practice and a disengagement in transmitting the faith to new generations". Hopefully the outcome of the synod and the ensuing "Year of Faith" will begin to reverse the obvious disjoint we have in America between social doctrine and political practice. I suspect it may take more than a year.

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