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AUSCP responds to archbishop regarding social justice: 'If they are doing good, celebrate it!'

“We need synodality, not condemnation,” said Father Greg Barras, chair of the Leadership Team of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests. He was responding to reports of a speech given by Archbishop José Gomez to a gathering of lay movements in Spain. The archbishop referred to secular movements that promote social justice as “pseudo-religions.”

“We as priests in ministry, alongside women religious and lay leaders, are eager to work with all who share at least a portion of our vision,” Barras said. “We should listen to those who seek social justice as we do, and work with them.”

Gomez, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, said “The Catholic Church must proclaim Jesus Christ ‘boldly’ and ‘creatively’ in the face of new secular movements that promote ‘social justice,’ ‘wokeness’ and ‘intersectionality,’ among other beliefs, as the answer to all of society’s ills. Gomez apparently included Black Lives Matter among the “pseudo-religions.”

“The more I read Archbishop Gomez's statement of pseudo-religion, the more my stomach tightened,” said Father Stephen Newton, CSC, AUSCP executive director. “I thought of the Gospel passage where the disciples came to Jesus whining that some people, not of their number, were healing and driving out demons. Jesus' response was basically ‘if they are doing good, celebrate it!’”

Father Michael Bausch, vice-chair of the AUSCP Leadership Team said social justice is a central Gospel value and an integral component of Catholic Church teaching. “Being one who has dedicated most of my ministry to the social justice portion of the Gospel, I felt disdain at his words, my life’s work dismissed.”

Barras said he hoped the archbishop’s comments would be called into question by the membership of the USCCB, holding their general assembly later this month. “I fear nothing will heal the growing divide among American bishops, but we need to pray that they will embrace the call of Pope Francis to synodality” Barras said. “We need to pray for them.”

For comments or more information:

Rev. Greg Barras, chair, gregbarras@gmail.com

Rev. Michael Bausch, vice-chair, Michael.Bausch@dor.org

Rev. Stephen Newton, CSC, executive director, auscpexdir@gmail.com

Sister Jackie Doepker, OSF, executive secretary, office@auscp.org

Paul Leingang, Communications,

auscp.communications@gmail.com

(812) 459-1374