

UNSEEMLY ATTACK ON FATHER SIRICO

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds to an article posted on the website of today's *National Catholic Reporter* by Michael Sean Winters that is highly critical of Father Robert Sirico, president of the Acton Institute:

Let me first acknowledge that I consider Father Robert Sirico to be a great priest and a great friend. Anyone who knows him can testify to the depth and sincerity of his faith, as well as to his great sense of humor.

In 2007, I gladly defended Father Sirico against an attack from the right that appeared in *Culture Wars*; the author, Thomas J. Herron, has since passed away. Now Father Sirico is being attacked from the left by Michael Sean Winters. The central issue in both cases is the same: Sirico's gay activist years before he became a priest.

Winters tells us that in the early and mid-1970s, Sirico, who had quit Catholicism at the age of 13, became a minister and performed gay marriages. Then he had a conversion: he came back to Catholicism and eventually became a priest. No one, including Winters, has ever even hinted that he hid his past from those who accepted him back and ordained him. So what's the point? The point is that Winters, a Catholic dissident, is unhappy that Sirico is not in rebellion against the teachings of the Catholic Church. That's true, and that is why he doesn't write for the *National Catholic Reporter*.

What seems to be bothering Winters the most is the prominence which Father Siricio has achieved, especially his appearances with Raymond Arroyo on EWTN. One can almost hear Winters say that if only the orthodox Catholics who watch EWTN learn that Sirico was once a gay-friendly guy, they'll throw him under

the bus. Wrong. Orthodox Catholics actually believe in redemption.