Opinion

by Dennis Coday

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Welcome to our online letters to the editor column. It's online but based on the old-fashioned letters to the editor format: Send me your thoughts and ideas, reactions and responses. I will collect them, curate them, and every Friday afternoon, I will post a collection to the NCR Today blog.

Directions on how to join the conversation follow the letters.

Confused by Vatican action, inaction

Between the articles on NCR, and the general press, I cannot help but wonder what the Catholic Church really is today.

In the article on Jesuit Fr. Hans Zollner, he is quoted as stating that the church “has all the necessary norms and laws in place to safeguard minors from abuse by clergy…” He offers that as a fact that we are all to take at face value. He goes on to state that the problem is “a lack of understanding or caring about those rules,” seemingly concluding what needs to change are the church’s “procedures.” This article sickened me, as it strongly suggests that so little has really changed in the church. The focus remains on legalities and procedures.

And then we hear that Francis has been meeting with victims on a regular basis. While I was glad to hear this, the news left me perplexed, perhaps even bewildered. Francis seems to understand, in that he describes the process the victims go through as leaving them “annihilated.” Yet, nothing changes. Where are those tribunals? Where even, is the Papal Commission? Where’s the broom to sweep the Vatican clean? Instead, Francis issues a motu proprio allowing Vatican bishops to stay on after age 75… It’s all to perplexing, and frustrating.

I want so badly to be able to believe in the church again. But even as Francis and other clerics seem to start to understand what parents knew from the beginning, the haunting questions remain, with no real change.

Fred Kempf
Dallas, Texas

Shifting paradigms

Michael Sean Winter's excellent article on paradigm shifts could have noted the major paradigm shift that came with one of Vatican II's shortest documents, Nostra Aetate, no. 4, which rejected the ancient Christian teaching of contempt against Jews and Judaism, and, indeed, Marcionism, and established a new and vital relationship of the Church with the religion and people of Yeshua/Jesus.

Eugene Fisher
Distinguished Professor of Theology,
Saint Leo University

Find opportunities to proclaim Christ the Light

During Lent, we are reminded that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. But we have at least three opportunities to proclaim publicly and privately, all year, that belief.

First, at the Easter Vigil each liturgical calendar year. Second, at a supermarket. Third, at a garage or home entrance. On March 31, 2018, and/or at each liturgical calendar year, at any Roman Catholic Easter Vigil, we are invited to respond three times, to the proclamation "Light of Christ" chanted by a presider. In the dark milieu, we respond, “Thanks be to God” as the presider raises the paschal candle light higher and higher. However, this "Christ the Light" chant is only a reminder to those who attend the Easter Vigil.

A second opportunity to proclaim "Christ the Light " is at a supermarket. In some markets there are automatic motion-detecting devices that trigger "welcome lights" in various display cases. As the customer approaches the display, the lights brighten inviting the customer to "come closer" to the light.

The third opportunity to proclaim "Christ the Light", is at some garage doors and home entrances where there are mounted motion-detecting devices that automatically turn on lights at these portals.

So the next time you approach the Paschal Candle, the "Welcome Lights" in a supermarket, and/or at a portal, remember that "Christ the Light" is always inviting us to "Come closer"!

(Sr.) Annamarie Marcalus OSF
Iowa City, Iowa 52245

Excommunication

About 15 years ago, I attended a wedding at which several Catholics from the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, were present; during the reception, we interacted about our respective parishes. I was shocked to learn that these good people had been excommunicated in their Lincoln Diocese because of membership in Call to Action, whereas in my diocese I had not been.

We came to a practical yet sad solution: In order to receive the sacraments, they would have to cross the Platte or Missouri River into the neighboring state or diocese, where their excommunication had no validity. If this situation had not been so sad, it would have been humorous!

PAUL J. ACKERMAN
Columbus, Mississippi

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Response to Sen. Kaine

Thanks to Sen. Tim Kaine for so candidly and sincerely explaining his position as a Catholic lawmaker on legalized abortion. There is something to his point that Catholics should not demand that citizens who are not Catholic follow Catholic teaching.

But it is not the case that Catholics oppose abortion because of doctrine and law. We oppose abortion because abortion is the killing of innocent human life and so is an intrinsic evil. It is evil whether you are Catholic are not. And Catholics know, not by doctrine or law but by reason and experience, that the deliberate committing of an evil act has ultimately deleterious effects not only on the agent and his or her temporal and eternal well-being, but on that of the entire human fabric of relationships.

If I understand Sen. Kaine, he is personally opposed to abortion because, as a Catholic, he follows Catholic law. But Catholics are opposed to abortion not because of Catholic law but because of the kind of act that abortion is; Catholic law simply follows and affirms that determination.

Catholics have the privilege and the obligation, not to demand that people follow their laws, but to witness to the luminous conclusions of right reason applied to human experience in view of human beatitude.

(Fr.) MARK A. SCOTT, OCSO
Peosta, Iowa

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Sen. Tim Kaine states, "I am personally opposed to abortion yet support its legality." Seeing movement at a great distance, although not certain it was a deer, the determined hunter shot and killed a human being. No one was surprised when he was convicted of manslaughter.

Likewise, it cannot be proven that the fetus or embryo that is aborted is not a human being. In fact, there is reasonable doubt fortified by the belief or many reputable embryologists and gynecologists that it is a human being. Accordingly, as long as there is a reasonable doubt, abortion should be declared unlawful. Therefore, any statute proven to be illegal should not be supported by a person of an informed good conscience.

(Fr.) CHARLES VAN WINKLE, CSC
Austin, Texas

Join the Conversation

Just like the old-fashioned letters to the editor, I will not be posting everything sent to me, and submissions will have to conform to the rules, but I pledge to do my best to represent the full range of letters that I receive. Here are the rules:

- Letters to the editor should be submitted to comments@ncronline.org.
- Letters to the editor should be limited to 250 words.
- First consideration is given to letters written in response to an article that has appeared on NCRonline.org.
- Letters must include your name, street address, city, state and zip code. — We will publish your name and city, state, but not your full address.
- Please include a daytime telephone number where we can reach you. — We will not publish your phone number. It may be used for verification.
- We can't guarantee publication of all letters, but you can be assured that your comments will receive careful consideration.
- Published letters may be edited for length and style.

These are the same rules that have guided the letters to the editor column in our print edition for 53 years, so I hope they work here, too.