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 post a collection to the NCR Today blog.

Directions on how to join the conversation follow the letters.

Separating children

The U.S. bishops have not, in my opinion, been strong enough about the policy of separating children from their parents (NCR, July 13-26). The practice is not only unfortunate but it's also absolutely immoral and sinful. It's a violation of the human rights of the children. Besides, its un-American, inhuman and un-Christian. No Catholic can in good conscience support such a policy.

(Fr.) Justin Nolan, OSB

Latrobe, Pennsylvania

Personal blame, corporate accountability

Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington is correct that the USCCB should formulate a process to address rumors and reports of hierarchs' using their power to abuse others. However, the process should be both wider and deeper in scope.

A major scandal as yet not formally addressed is the hierarchy's utter failure to take deserved responsibility for the concealment and resultant growth and festering of the centuries long sexual abuse of minors and subordinates throughout the church. Blame McCarrick for his own behavior, yes, but blame the hierarchy, right to the papal throne, for knowing, ignoring and even concealing.

The hierarchy, not the actual bad actors, is the true scandalmonger. That work has been done well, but its price is staggeringly high in people lost to the Church.

Katharine Wilson Conroy

New Rochelle, NY

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In May you had a headline that said all of Chile's bishops offered their resignation. Your recent articles on McCarrick and how to deal with bad bishops offers good insights, yet still misses the mark big time. The only way for the hierarchy to regain a modicum of integrity is for ALL BISHOPS who knew of credible sex abuse allegations, and did nothing to protect children, to offer their resignation. All else is window dressing.

All the committees, studies, gatherings, and pontificating will simply chip away at the titanic iceberg of scandal aversion and secrecy. No meaningful action as yet.

If the pope is inundated with resignations, so be it. If the church is left with left with a leaner and more honest hierarchy, so be it. If the "nones" and "formers" see truth and integrity emanating from the top, they may have their trust somewhat restored and return to the faith.

We must stop pecking at the carcass of a supremely flawed church leadership. BISHOPS RESIGN!

Tony Jannotta Arlington Heights, Ill.

Let 'er blow

The news in your June 15-28 issue would leave one close to despair if it were not for your Francis cartoon, more heartwarming reports from our quietly heroic Catholic women religious and the common sense of Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese.

It's a hard choice as to which news is the least “Catholic" — denial of women's ordination or refusing Communion to interfaith spouses. Both trigger a nagging conclusion: Somehow, our core belief that the risen Jesus lives in our Eucharist has never progressed from the brain to the heart of the Catholic hierarchy.

This first "brain" choice deliberately leaves whole areas bereft of Jesus' last gift to us. The second is simply an infantile "mine!" attitude toward sharing.

Does not Catholic leadership — personified in Cardinal Luis Ladaria's statements — risk blasphemy in refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the Holy Spirit's call not just to the ordination of women but to Communion as well?

That Francis cartoon is breathtaking. A mere three pictures and a dozen-plus words recreate the Pentecost's mighty wind. Let 'er blow!

Naola T. Conner

Phoenix

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In reference to the recent NCR articles regarding decisions to stall a request by German bishops for ecumenical communion, and to block a commission's conclusion on women's ordination to the diaconate — Jesus, I recall, had very straightforward words for religious leaders who maintained their authority by suppressing others. He called them "hypocrites" and "whitewashed tombs."

Hypocrites because they presented a pretense of pastoral guidance while seeking primarily to maintain power. Whitewashed tombs because beneath the persona of holiness lay the deadness of an unawakened heart, incapable of a truly empathic, life-giving presence.

Did Jesus really mean for his followers to use Eucharist, the sacramental offering of God's unconditional love, as an instrument of punishment and exclusion? Did he really intend to perpetuate a male-dominated system of patriarchy? Was that not the very system of oppression he gave his life to dismantle? When he prayed, "That all may be one," was Jesus really referring to future Roman Catholics, or did he envision a unified humanity, honoring the beautiful diversity of all God's children?

Will we as his lovers and followers continue to be hypocrites and whitewashed tombs, or will we allow his spirit to open our hearts, remove our sense of superiority, and become the love, peace and ministers of reconciliation he commanded us all to be?

Clare Julian Carbone

Salt Lake City, Utah

Literalizing Satan

On June 10 at my parish, the homilist failed to indicate that the Yahwistic story of "the fall" is a myth, mentioned Adam and Eve's disobedience and original sin as a historical happening, and referenced "paradise" as lost to humanity by that sin — "ole time religion" to be sure.

Good scientific biblical criticism acknowledges that Genesis 1-11 is pre-history, employing "figurative language" with talking animals evidencing storytelling: truths in fable form.

Today's cosmology, evolution, psychology, the 13.7-billion-year story of the universe, etc., all provide a much different perspective on evil — not a consequence of a historical misstep on the part of an early pair of bipedal hominids.

In speaking of religious truths, especially those couched in myth, it is important to acknowledge the genre in which the message is contained. Religious myths remain myths and fables, fables — and must be respected as such. Otherwise, the preaching will not make sense to today's more scientifically attuned youth and adults.

Likewise, mythical references to "Satan" were historicized. Objectifying the symbolic imagery of these etiological myths is neither accurate exegesis nor good religious education. In short, literalizing "Satan" is not helpful and may, indeed, be harmful. This level of preaching, it seems to me, arises from an outmoded cosmology and a failure to recognize the kind of literature involved and the different worldview.

No wonder the "nones" are on the increase — the second largest denominational group to Catholics being the religiously unaffiliated.

(Br.) Paul Cullen, CFX

Orangeburg, South Carolina

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Clinging to a teaching

Thank you, NCR, for the special series on Humanae Vitae at 50. Fr. Charles Curran, Joseph Selling and other theologians spoke thoughtfully on the historical, moral and hierarchical perspectives of the document and the difficulty most Catholics have experienced with the church's teaching on contraception. Their reflections can best be appreciated by those with at least some formative theological background.

But, for those in the pews for whom Humanae Vitae has not "descended into irrelevance," Jamie Manson's article was particularly compelling. She writes clearly about the harm that the policy causes both locally and globally and how a church, whose main goal is life-giving, is working against itself by clinging to a teaching that, in fact, increase abortions, denies reproductive healthcare to women in poor

countries and causes psychological and spiritual grief to many Catholics around the world.

Jacqueline Powers Doud

La Verne, California

[Jacqueline Powers Doud is an NCR board member.]

Migrant care

Phyllis Zagano's perspective about the treatment of migrants (NCR, June 29-July 12) was so meaningful for me as I have long wondered on driving trips around the country why little abandoned towns and decaying neighborhoods couldn't be put to good use in this vast land of possibilities.

I am grateful for her suggestion that money intended to keep people out of this country could be so sensibly used to aid migrant families to put their creativity, their hard work and their desire for a better life to use.

I believe there is a place for all people of good will to find the peace they need and to share their gifts with the rest of us.

Maryann Kramer

Lake Villa, Illinois

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.