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by NCR Staff

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Two recent NCR editorials shared a common thread of division within the Catholic Church. "Bannon's emerging anti-Francis movement threatens church unity" and "One pope is quite enough" sparked a fury of conversation on social media and in NCR's letter to the editor inbox. Following is a sample of those letters, which have been edited for length and clarity.

Regarding your editorial on "Bannon's emerging anti-Francis movement threatens church unity," I fear Steve Bannon, who worked so hard with Trump to create a dystopian presidency, is using those same tactics and talents in the Catholic Church to create a much more conservative religion for the sake of not only dividing the church, but also ending the papacy of Pope Francis.



The church has, thankfully, become more liberal in the 20th and now 21st century, as it needs to be. Our concerns are less on rules and regulations of fasting and no fish on Fridays, neither eating or drinking a sip of water before receiving Communion, thinking sex is a necessary evil to procreate children, banning birth control and of course, contraception, and all those rules I remember from childhood. The church is much more interested in we as human, thanks to Francis.

We have to fight Bannon, and can't let him further divide the church. Your editorial hints at that but needs to be, in my opinion, much more forceful. Bannon and his prelate supporters are indeed a threat to the future of the church.

DIANA L. DIAMOND

Palo Alto, California

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I have long said that the biggest threat to the church is not the deviate sex scandal of clergy, but dissension between the present pope and the retired pope. It could even create a schism.

ROBERT HAY

Texarkana, Texas

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This is rich: Steve Bannon's rallying cry is the pope's failure to solve the sex abuse crisis. The right's hero, Pope John Paul II, helped extend the crisis by his refusal to admit its existence. It was "God's work" that Trump won office? Seriously? God must be very busy engineering elections all around the globe.

Bannon is casting about for another shot at international notoriety. His ego does not allow him to fade away. Instead he takes on the Catholic Church — and the fact that he is aligned philosophically with the extremist Cardinal Raymond Burke does not impress me — to sow further division. If he genuinely cared for the church, he would seek unity, not division.

MARCY MELDAHL

Powell, Tennessee

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The article is a backhand slap at President Donald Trump and Trump voters. What Bannon is doing is not "on" Trump who fired him. I am neither a "Confederate supporter nor an anti-immigrant troll." I support Trump's actions on the economy, defense, against evil despots, and unabashed pro-life, pro-Judeo/Christian positions. I support Catholic social teaching and Trump, and find them not inconsistent. Your anti-Trump bias is misplaced.

JAKE HEGARTY

Johns Creek, Georgia

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As a young Catholic, I must state my deep reverence and respect for Pope Benedict XVI. I was not fortunate enough to have experienced the form of the Mass (Tridentine Latin Mass) that my parents, grandparents, and millions of Catholics were fortunate enough to be blessed with. They had a beautiful Mass which was/is

rich in tradition stretching back over 1,000 years. They did not have the "make-it-up-as-we-go-along" masses and services I experienced, nor the litany of liturgical abuses. They grew up with true and holy priests trained and molded in a strict seminary system, not the lax, modernist, agenda of seminaries today where not holiness, but socio-political issues rule the day. They knew a line of saintly and holy popes stretching back 500-plus years, and maybe even more.

But, for a brief time, I was fortunate to get a glimpse of this magnificent church through the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI.

When he resigned and we got Francis, I knew that the church was immediately jettisoned back to the chaos of the 1970s, and all the dissent and iconoclastic disrespect for Catholic tradition — including liturgical — that went with it. Francis and his people and their agendas epitomize this. They are destroying the church faster than Vatican II ever did. Benedict XVI and John Paul II, and all the popes before them spoke of Jesus and the Blessed Mother, of Catholic belief and tradition, and of God. Francis speaks only socio-politicism and migrants.

Steve Bannon and his growing movement and the churchmen and intellectuals who support him, and tens of thousands of Catholics — soon a number to be not so miniscule — represent the classic Catholic Church in every way, including liturgy. It is a church millions, especially the young, long for. Not the agenda and Catholic vision of Francis and company.

I applaud Bannon and those who are joining him. Like the great Archbishop Carlo Vigano, I hope they soon become an unstoppable force to bring a halt to the wreckage caused by Francis and his people. If Francis were to be forced to resign, so much the better. It would be better to have a new pope who represents classical, traditional Catholicism, not the trendy, cool, socially active, "merciful," caring, open, dissenting, "church" of Francis and company.

HIDEYORI M. TAKEMITSU

Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

Thank you for this courageous editorial "One pope is quite enough." Any time I am confronted with making a difficult decision or taking an action that will undoubtedly

affect the lives of others, I try to remember to ask myself two questions before moving forward:

1. What is my motivation?

2. Will it (the decision or action) serve to benefit those who might be affected, or will it serve more harm than good?

I think it is too soon to say that the summit in February will make a difference in the lives of the survivors, or even in the life of the church moving forward. But I am convinced that making a positive change was exactly what was behind Francis' motivation in calling for the summit.

As much as it pains me to say this, I'm really unclear as to what Pope Benedict XVI's motivation in writing this letter was. For me, it simply highlighted a divisiveness in my beloved church that continues to feel like a wound that will never heal. Did Benedict think about that?

DARIA G. FITZGERALD

Milford, Connecticut

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So let me understand here. NCR and certain theologians believe that one voice must be silenced. They believe that not one good thing could come from this one voice. Indeed, they believe that this one, now clearly aged and weak voice, is so strong that it can undo whatever agenda others believe is or ought to be in place. They believe that whatever corrective advice is needed to handle this complex disaster in society and the church has in fact been pronounced or soon will be and there is no room for a second opinion. In the old days we used to call this paranoia.

In the old days this form of condemnation of the individual by the self-appointed elite resulted in many excommunications, suspensions and interdicts and in the end rarely advanced the agenda of the elite or the group as a whole.

DAVID M. WHALEN

Toledo, Ohio

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In the event that a person has a cancer growing in his or her body, should that person be charitable to it and let it continue its destructive growth? Or should the cancer be excised?

I believe it was Beckett in the play "Galileo" who wrote something to the effect of "I can see their divine compassion, but where is their divine anger?" Or as Cicero proclaimed, "*Quo usque tandem abutere, Catalina, patientia nostra*?"

The time has come for discernment and decisive action.

RAYMOND STOVICH

San Jose, California

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Pope Benedict XVI abdicated his accountability and responsibility to reform the curial power structure and aggressively resolve the sex abuse crisis of his predecessors by choosing to resign and self-appoint himself as pope emeritus.

The time has come for canon law to contain a section addressing the resignation of a sitting pope including, title, role, function, and behavioral expectations as bishop emeritus of the Rome Diocese.

This would enable the Holy Spirit to work through Pope Francis to initiate a collegial balance of power to address major moral issues by holding the pope, College of Cardinals, bishops, religious superiors, priests, vowed religious and laity responsible and accountable for either their actions or inactions.

Finally, laity, priests, bishops, theologians and the magisterium need to participate in an interactive system of governance. This would enable the power of the Holy

Spirit to inspire the people of God in continuing the mission of Jesus Christ for a caring and compassionate church.

LAWRENCE J. DONNELLY

Auburn, Washington

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I just read NCR's editorial "One pope is not enough" and I think it was one of the most concise articles regarding Pope Benedict XVI's recent letter on the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church.

You pulled no punches at all. You simply laid it out in simple sentences and I applaud you for doing it.

We need NCR's voice, perhaps we have never needed it more than we do right now.

You help us find — and use — our voices.

MARY E. WUDTKE

Chicago, Illinois

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Apropos your editorial "One pope is quite enough" many of us will be reminded of the comment of Stanley Baldwin who was prime minister in the UK for three separate terms in the years between World War I and World War II.

When out of office he was frequently importuned to criticize his successors and his response was always, " Once you leave the bridge, you leave. You don't spit on the deck."

Good advice for prime ministers, presidents and popes.

STEPHEN J. FEARON

Bronx, New York

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