Opinion
News



by NCR Staff

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NCR readers are welcome to join the conversation and send us a letter to the editor. Below is a sampling of letters received in the month of May 2019. If you want to respond to an article published in NCR, follow the steps listed at the end of this post.

We are writing in response to the article "At a parish in Indiana, it's Francis vs. Benedict writ small" by Peter Feuerherd. Our family joined the parish of St. Joseph

Church in Hammond, Indiana, in December 2018 when the traditional Latin Mass had been restored.

We are grateful to Bishop Donald Hying, the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign priest, Canon Glenn Gardner and the parishioners of St. Joseph for allowing us to celebrate this most beautiful liturgy of the Mass in the Diocese of Gary, Indiana. This Holy Mass is like heaven on earth! Reading this article and the attacks of some parishioners really show their ignorance about this beautiful liturgy. They bring personal attacks against traditionalism, whereas, it is not traditionalism that is radical. We need to fight the real enemy, which is Satan.



In this era of modernism and of today's culture, Catholics are so divided and sometimes confused in the practice of morals and faith. The Catholic faithful who appreciate the true devotion to Our Lady the Blessed Virgin Mary, who learn and try to live the teachings from the Holy Bible and traditions and who receive consistently the graces from the sacraments will find love in this beautiful liturgy of the traditional Latin Mass.

We pray for the traditional Latin Mass to continue and to grow at St. Joseph Church in Hammond, if it be God's will.

KEVIN SMITH

Schererville, Indiana

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With regards to your article about St. Joseph Church, it is a perfect example of one-sided journalism full of inaccuracies and bias. You could have had the integrity to interview a parishioner who attends the Tridentine Mass at St. Joseph's. NCR continues to prove that it is not Catholic.

How dare you tear down a good priest in your article. Your lack of charity is another example of how NCR is not Catholic.

I will pray for your conversion

TIM AHEARN

Hammond, Indiana

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The title choice of this article is totally inappropriate and supports the illusion of a rift between former Pope Benedict and Pope Francis there is no real evidence for. It also is wrong considering the accommodations Francis has made to those who want to practice traditional Mass.

In my experiences in various churches across the Midwest, whether they be "traditional" or "Vatican II," there is a wide array of people from all walks of life and religious opinion. To use the poor experiences of one parish to cast a whole religious order in a bad light as a group working against the pope is wrong. The title for this article is not only unfounded, it's totally inappropriate.

NICK HECKMAN

Minster, Ohio

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Apparently, the critics of Canon Gardner and the Institute of Christ the King believe the influence of Pope Francis is too small at St. Joseph's. May I suggest some remedies? Francis recently told the Swiss Guards, "Cultural, religious and social diversity is a human richness and not a threat." One would think the critics of the Institute of Christ the King would welcome the chance to put the words of Francis into practice, and consider the presence of the Institute of Christ the King to be a human richness and not a threat.

Francis has also stated that God wills the diversity of religions. Again, why not put the words of Francis into practice? Or is the religion of the Traditional Latin Mass, which is Catholic, by the way, not "willed by God" but Islam and Protestantism, for example, are?

Francis preaches mercy, accompaniment, dialogue, forgiveness, tenderness. He washes and kisses the feet of prisoners, yet where is any of this "mercy and tenderness" found among the critics of Canon Gardner? He is attacked for something that happened and that he repented of 20 years ago. Is this mercy? One wonders what the critics' attitude is toward St. Augustine, St. Paul, and even St. Peter, all of whom repented of earlier misdeeds.

Wine was served at the luncheon at the insistence of Canon Gardner. Was this a criticism? I hope not, because wine was also served at Cana, the best wine miraculously provided by Our Lord at the insistence (or request) of our Blessed Mother.

RALPH J. MELCHERT

Seymour, Wisconsin

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Your headline for the article on the conflict among the parishioners of St. Joseph's Church, Hammond Indiana promotes an understanding that the current pope and the pope emeritus are engaged in a personal struggle. Neither these two men nor the church they love is well served by promoting an image of personal hostility between them.

I hope NCR will support an irenic spirit rather than a polemic one.

TESSE HARTIGAN DONNELLY

Oak Park, Illinois

Catholics in Indiana who know Mayor Pete Buttigieg and have followed his career will not recognize him in the disappointing and negative column from Michael Sean Winters.

It is true that Mayor Pete has an astonishingly impressive resume and list of accomplishments for a 37-year-old, but no one who knows him believes that he is a shallow resume-builder. Winters' paragraph on the writer Andrew Sullivan's disdain for Rhodes scholars is a sweeping stereotype from a writer who could not possibly have any insight into Mayor Pete. That Winters would use this as an argument for undercutting Mayor Pete's candidacy suggests a lack of objectivity and closed mindedness.

I was most disappointed with Winters' failure to understand what makes Buttigieg such an inspiring and compelling political force. Winters assumes that Buttigieg, because he has accomplished so much at such a young age, must lack the empathy and heart that come from defeats and life's tough lessons.

If Winters researched Mayor Pete's career in any detail, he would know that Buttigieg was trounced in his first bid for political office in 2010. How does Winters not understand that a gay young man growing up in a very Catholic city like South Bend, home to the University of Notre Dame (his parents' employer) and attending a Catholic high school has endured enough hard knocks to empathize with anyone who is suffering?

This aspect of his personality, not his resume, is why he has connected so well with voters, including Catholic voters, like me.

If we truly want to nominate a candidate with the right stuff — intellect, temperament and character — we should avoid cynical stereotypes and support authentic and emerging servant leaders like Pete

Buttigieg.

BARBARA MAURATH

Indianapolis, Indiana

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I admire Mayor Pete. He's bright, articulate, and makes an effort not to harm others.

I don't know very much about the other Democratic candidates and I'm looking forward to the debates! My overall impression is that they are all more intelligent than President Donald Trump and certainly more honest ... to say the least!

I wish all the Democratic candidates the best of luck during the debates and hope that the best candidate is elected.

FRANK A. LOSTAUNAU

San Francisco

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Can I just say that the opinion article by Michael Sean Winters was actually well-informed and surprisingly non-biased. I didn't expect that from the National Catholic Reporter. I had never read an article before in this journal but I think, I'm going to have to start.

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS

Hanford, California

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Michael Sean Winters disappoints in his current comments. It sounds more like a commentary from the Republican opposition. They are most likely to demean the candidate with the preface "mayor" in front of his name to dog whistle "inexperience."

The Republicans would also be wont to emphasize his sexual orientation and same-sex marriage, anathema to a presidential candidate or so they believe. What they would fail to cover are the important statement this man has made about the important issues of our times. And of course there would be no mention of his military service. Is it at all likely that the opposition will start quoting NCR in their Twitter launch if Pete Buttigieg moves up in the polls?

JOSEPH F. GUDERIAN

St. Marys, Georgia

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I'm writing in response to Michael Sean Winters' article on Mayor Pete Buttigieg. In every interview and in every response from this man I see a person who is Christlike. He is a man without malice. He leads with love and good will. I'll put aside his genius and capacity to communicate in a way that approaches literature.

In writing to a Catholic publication, my main observation about Mayor Pete is his kindness, his decency, his respect for people and the truth. He calls out hypocrisy in a way that reminds me of Christ. America will have a chance at a return to moral order if he becomes the person we pay attention to on a daily basis instead of the current stain occupying the White House. Mayor Pete would be the best and clearest antidote to Trump.

I hope America has not lost its ability to know what is good for it and if it has not, Mayor Pete will, and should be, president.

BILL C. DAVIS

Torrington, Connecticut

I just finished reading the story about Spencer Cullom, a young woman who wanted to be ordained as a United Methodist minister.

I am a Roman Catholic, 75 years old, and through the years have come to the conclusion that sexual orientation is born in the genes, not made. The Catholic Church would lose many priests and parishioners if we eliminated all LGBT people.

I almost wept when I got to the end of the article. Her young heart was truly broken, and not by God. I trust the Lord to find her a place where she will be welcomed and respected.

SALLY SIMMONS

Trail, British Columbia

I was so happy to read Tom Roberts article about the church changing, not failing. I was a very young woman in 1964 when Vatican II was in its infancy and I was scared to death about the future of the church. The good Sisters of Mercy had taught me that the Roman Catholic Church does not change! The Mass is identical in every single country, the dogmas are identical, it is all the same and always will be. And I better be a very serious follower, and become perfect, and never sin, or I'll wind up in hell.

It wasn't until 1973 when my then 6-year-old daughter started grade school at a Catholic school, that my view and feelings began to change. She brought her homework to me for help. As I reviewed the homework from her religion class, I saw that she was learning about Jesus who has compassion for us — so much so that he was willing to be tortured, and hung on a cross to show just how much we were loved.

At one point, I told her that I had to go to the washroom. When I closed the door, I broke down in tears — realizing that my child was being given a faith and a church that I had not. That is when I became a Vatican II Catholic!

Roberts' article brought all this back to me. The church throughout its history has been through strange, hard, frightening, severely dangerous times. It has never, ever failed. It however, has been changed, and is still in the process of change, and it will continue according to the will of our Triune God.

MARY WUDTKE

Chicago, Illinois

Advertisement

For a magazine that has affirmed the cause of peace and justice for decades, I was disappointed to see your vigorous attacks in editorial "George Weigel, wrong then, wrong now" by the semi-anonymous entity called NCR editorial staff. This arbitrarily judgmental, unpeaceful and unjust editorial attacked not only senior analyst and author George Weigel about also the canonization process of St. Pope John Paul II (completed by Pope Francis in 2014).

While it is convenient to identify the source of the sexual abuse crisis as "systemic" and cultural, the state grand jury reports listed specific people during specific time periods. This crisis was caused by specific, personal behaviors that can be described as "unfaithful." Note: Many priests, bishops and religious have been steadily faithful to their vows (including vows of celibacy) throughout their lifetimes. Faithfulness and excellence are another part of the Catholic culture to be acknowledged and affirmed.

In contrast, I was pleased to see the well-written, balanced, informative analysis of the actual Catholic University event by NCR intern Jesse Remedios in "Catholic University sex abuse series wraps with starkly different viewpoints." It was nicely done and had the appearance of being prudently detailed and accurate.

GREG GRIFFITH

Peyton, Colorado

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Thank you for this information. The truth, painful as it may be, will set us free. And yes, it was not the work of God that perverted our clerics and our church, but choice was involved at some level.

Bringing the darkness into the light is definitely the work of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for being faithful to the truth.

SHARON NELSEN

Sorrento, Florida

I very much appreciated the article "Sanctions against Venezuela: diplomatic tool or indiscriminate weapon?" I agree with most of the analysis in the article. However, I

would challenge what was reported from an article in VOX.

It is inaccurate to report that on May 2, "A group of anti-Maduro activists clashed with a group of intervention protesters at the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, D.C." Readers would assume that there was some type of fight between the protesters and the Guaido supporters. That is not true. I have been to the embassy both inside for five or six days, and outside.

The mob violence has been committed by the Guaido supporters and has been allowed to happen by the Secret Service and the D.C. Metropolitan Police. There is a mob of thugs harassing and threatening those of us trying to protect the embassy. One thug did get inside the dmbassy not far from where I had been sleeping and trashed an office. He was not arrested.

What is happening at the Venezuelan embassy is that the State Department has allowed a mob to engage in psychological warfare against the Embassy Protection Collective. And the police forces have permitted this violence to happen unchecked. These thugs are blocking entrances, turning on sirens at all hours and (when we were trying to speak with reporters) and preventing food from getting inside to the people in the embassy. Note that the police are allowing this violent behavior to take place without recourse.

I have been engaged in risking arrest for decades to protect injustice, so I have a lot of experience dealing with police. I have never seen anything close to the police behavior that I have witnessed at the Venezuelan embassy in all my years as a nonviolent activist.

JANICE SEVRE-DUSZYNSKA

Towson, Maryland

Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister's eighth step of humility column was perfect! In an earlier article about the inability to decide if female bishops were sacramentally blessed or not in Jesus' time, I was thinking "Why does it matter? Isn't it more important to do what is needed for the church to continue doing what it does?"

In this article, Joan answers my question: Yes! The church will survive, even if some small things need to be changed or adjusted. The big things — the Eucharist,

baptism, will never change. But if we lack people to keep the church alive and functioning, we will lose far more than we do by making small changes.

LYNNE MILLER

Oakland, California

Thank you, Charles Geisler and Kings Bay Plowshares, for expanding the scope of the religious freedom argument into the question of war.

Here in New York City, our Catholic episcopate in the person of Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas D'Arienzo and New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan enthusiastically support the exemption given to Catholic institutions from anything that might force compliance with federal regulations supporting abortion and birth control.

But why won't the church also extend religious freedom protection to capital punishment, war tax resistance and non-violence civil disobedience?

As a Catholic, the use of the death penalty in our criminal justice system and the waste associated with our bloated war department's budget, violates my Catholic-formed conscience.

Why can't I as a Catholic have an exemption from paying taxes that support war preparations and capital punishment?

I have written to both D'Arienzo and Dolan asking for guidance on this issue, but still have not received a reply.

GENE ROMAN

Bronx, New York

At the end of the article by Tim Busch today, "New papal sex abuse policy will help restore trust," you wrote:

Tim Busch is founder of the Napa Institute, a Catholic lay apostolate that advocates church reform.

How could you possibly say that the NAPA Institute "advocates church reform"? it is a group of wealthy Catholics who support libertarian economics and think it is within the Catholic framework of social justice.

This has nothing to do with reform. It has everything to do with protecting the status quo of the church and their wealth.

NORBERT BUFKA

Midland, Michigan

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts and ideas, reactions and responses to letters@ncronline.org. The editor will collect them, curate them and publish a sampling in Letters to the Editor online or in our print edition.

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