Opinion
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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 October 2019. If you want to respond to an article published in NCR, follow the steps listed at the end of this post.

Thank you for your editorial: "Despite moments of welcome, LGBTQ Catholics still on the margins." Enough already with this dance of death and the hurt it is causing!

Why do we continue to refuse to "show mercy to those who suffer so unjustly sins against [Christ's] love?"

Yes, I suppose Pope Francis is sending a message. However, does the poor man have to set his hair on fire to get the attention of some church leaders who themselves are toying dangerously close to epitomizing the definition of "intrinsically disordered?"

(Fr.) EDWARD G. LAMBRO

Paterson, New Jersey

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Since we all belong to the mystical body of Christ, we need to see the expertise that Jesuit Fr. James Martin has afforded us. For my adolescent development class, I have used his book: *Becoming Who You Are* which was transformational to many of my graduate students and they passed it on to others. In the book, he illustrates his points with Mother Teresa, Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen. He was a gift in enlightening some of my students.



I also read his book *Jesus* which outlines how he traveled in the Holy Land. Because of this book, I really knew the Lord and studied and loved him when I was in the Holy Land. In that book, Martin also called us to draw near to our neighbor and offer who Christ is to them. He is an inspirational writer.

One of my friends who is a scholarly priest told me that there is nothing in his writings or presentations that isn't in keeping with the church's morality and laws. He is a man of God. I think Catholics on the whole are somewhat reluctant to make any kind of changes. His book *Building a Bridge* asks us to deepen our relationship with Jesus and to make room for all the people of God.

EILEEN QUINN KNIGHT

Chicago, Illinois

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The fundamental question is overarching — whether the sexual drive is subject to the control of the human will, no matter if the drive resides in any hetero- or homosexually-inclined individual.

No one is excluded from the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* that any genital acts outside of a committed, sacramental relationship which are open to life are objectively gravely disordered. That includes masturbation, contraception, and any non-marital acts which are not free, human and open to life.

Chastity is required of all, no one is exempt and no one is discriminated against.

HANNA KLAUS

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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I am aghast when I again read that the Catholic Church and many Catholics are up in arms against a writer and his book subtitled *How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter Into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*.

When did Jesus reject respect, compassion, and sensitivity? Oh yes! Perhaps that was when clergymen abused children.

MARY S. SCHRIBER

Richmond, Virginia

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In September, notorious conservative Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput condemned Martin's work in Philadelphia's diocesan newspaper. Chaput even wrote that Martin should never say "the Church welcomes gay people" without giving a list of conditions.

Shame on you Chaput and other likeminded bishops. Where is your humanity and Christianity? Just because you are homophobic, that does not mean you have a right to judge and restrict anyone's right to be who they authentically are.

The Roman Catholic Church hierarchy have again overstepped their bounds in so many instances and this is appalling.

Too bad the "laity" does not have the opportunity to give a list of conditions whereby you would be appointed bishop. Have your noticed that many of the "faithful" have voted with their monies and their feet? You and the bishops of Knoxville, Tennessee, and Springfield, Illinois, get off your high horses and get a grip.

ANNE HARTER

Belleville, Illinois

***

I would like to verify one sense in Jason Steidl's essay, "Neither is God's work limited to cosmopolitan cities such as Chicago and New York." I live in an unincorporated village in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, population 2,500. This is a very conservative, red part of California. It is also the home of Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Parks and the Diocese of Fresno retreat center. We have a mission church.

I am an 82-year-old widowed and out gay man, and I am very welcomed in the community and in our mission church, in which I am an active participant. I am a catechist for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Yes, there is hope in the grassroots for Catholic LGBT persons.

DON E. SIEGAL

Three Rivers, California

How sad are these New Jersey parishioners thinking they need a pastor appointed by some bishop

when all they need is pick one from among themselves?

Evidence that church hierarchy has programmed the unordained into thinking they need clerical intermediaries twixt them and their creator.

How sad.

JOHN CHUCHMAN

Central Lake, Michigan

***

As a cradle Catholic of 72 years, I have watched the church I love and treasure slowly disintegrate. The actions of Cardinal Joseph Tobin in allowing this parish to continue without a priest for an extended period of time is reprehensible!

The actions of both the archdiocese and Fr. Sean Manson seem to indicate an attitude of punishment for the parish rather than one of inclusion.

W.J. CARTER

Alba, Texas

I read with great interest the article "Miners in Kentucky are still feeling the hurt." But I don't believe my copy contained the full story. Where was the part where the powerful senator from Kentucky, the Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell, was doing everything within his great power to get an equitable settlement for the miners?

After all, McConnell has considerable time on his hands to attend to the needs of these constituents of his. He has all that free time from House passed legislation that he refuses to bring up in the Senate. He does nothing as President Donald Trump runs roughshod over what's left of our Constitution. Surely he has taken time

out from his fund raising to attend to the miners and their families.

In the future, please ensure that my copy of articles such as this do not contain such glaring omissions.

BILL KRISTOFCO

Parkville, Maryland

This story, "Kenyan man's search for his father runs into church cover-up" pushes the limits of "protect the priests" into a dimension of the absurd.

The refusal of Fr. Mario Lacchin to confront his past, his obdurate denial of paternity, needs to be confronted.

The superiors of his order have been, and continue to be, complicit in this.

Using the vow of obedience to bring this story into the light of truth is the least they can do.

The era of "perceive priests as perfect" is coming to an end. They are fallible humans. I honor the many priests I know who are faithful to their vows.

It is beyond time for the patriarchy to be dismantled. The church is not doing the world any favors by setting up idealistic norms and lying when they are violated.

The Greek Orthodox have a double system: some married clergy and some celibate monks. Married priests where there are strong cultural traditions to support them are sensible. I cheer the Amazon synod. Women ordained as deacons and priests are also long overdue. But that conversation is for another day.

PAMELA PARRISH

Marlborough, New Hampshire

I always thought John Henry Newman was the saint for our times from reading his Oxford sermons some 60 years ago. When I read this theologic/philosophic statement of his sometime in the 1950s, I simply accepted it as Newman's view of

our lives and repeated almost daily every since.

"In a higher life it may be otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to changer often."

JOHN KYSELA

Berkeley, California

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I am exceptionally pleased to know that Cardinal John Henry Newman is now canonized. While I am not the subject of a miracle, I am certain that he had a large part to play in my becoming a Roman Catholic in the first instance, a Benedictine monk in the second, and a priest in the third.

I served for many years in the U.S. Submarine Service both diesel and nuclear. Frequently a rather large library of books was delivered to Polaris submarines and in it on one occasion was Newman's development of doctrine and a few other works.

Newman's influence was very strong and as a result a lifelong desire to enter the church, was finally consummated. I have never looked back nor desired to do so. Thank you, St. John Henry Newman.

(Fr.) AARON S. PETERS, OSB

Atchison, Kansas

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The recently canonized John Henry Newman is being called "a saint for our times." This may be especially true for Catholics living at the edge and worshiping on the fringes of the institutional church: women in general and Roman Catholic Women Priests, LGBTQ men and women, Vatican II-type seniors still gathering in dwindling communities, millennials and their juniors still identifying as Catholic and not yet

having joined the massive exodus of those called "nones."

And for the many other loyal Catholics who know themselves to be under a cloud in their beloved church.

Because for much of his priestly life, first as an Anglican then as a Roman Catholic, Newman was not welcomed nor embraced by the leaders of either religious communion, was not praised but rather was denounced by them as a traitor and turncoat, as heterodox and subversive. During those years Newman knew himself to be and thought of himself as " under a cloud."

Pope Leo XIII lifted that cloud when he named Newman a cardinal, Pope Francis dispersed it canonizing him a saint. We live in Newman's church, one with constantly developing Christian doctrine. St. John Henry Newman, strengthen all of us at the edge, on the fringe, under a cloud.

EUGENE C. BEST

Hudson, Ohio

Amy Morris-Young's article "Amid vitriol and polarization, how can we love one another" resonated with me. People ask me why I believe there are few people in hell, if any.

I couldn't have said it better than some are "the catalyst against whom others are allowed to grow." Her last paragraph articulates my daily struggles.

ADELAIDE LOGES

Bothell, Washington

Peter Feuerherd's article on the limbo priest brings back wonderful memories of the 20 years (1990-2010) of vacationing on Sanibel Island and worshiping at St. Isabel's.

Fr. Christopher Senk was by far the best homilist theologically and pastorally I have been inspired by. It was known among the parishioners that Bishop Frank Dewane was not supportive of Senk's Vatican II spirit and liturgies, as previous Bishop John Nevins had been. It is truly disturbing that Senk has been rushed to judgement when

U.S. bishops accepted thousands of dollars from Bishop Michael Bransfield of West Virginia, who used millions of church dollars as his personal bank account. Have the recipients been investigated and censured?

The real issue with Senk is the desire of Dewane and most of the U.S. hierarchy to purge the American church of Vatican II aspirations; to establish absolute control of the laity. However, it is another failed conservative effort to turn the church back to a mythical golden age. And another episcopal action that is contributing to the demise of Catholicism in this country.

SYLVESTER BRETSCHNEIDER

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Thanks to NCR and Pat Marrin for his thought-provoking input. His Brother Leo cartoons are so often "spot on" and his Pencil Preaching inspired.

I keep coming back to his offering for Oct. 19, which was almost mind-numbingly traditional. I would like to share my take with him.

Yes, the parable (the unjust judge) is essentially on prayer. I suggest that it is a story about God's prayer and that the widow is a metaphor for God himself (and for Jesus as the revelation of God). God who identifies with the helpless, the poor — symbolized by a widow who would have no one in her culture to "fight her corner."

Why do we think that God does not pray, and that prayer is one directional? God is continually asking us to do justice, love mercy, to care for the widow (Amos comes to mind) — "bludgeoning us" to do the right thing. This judge eventually listens — albeit for the wrong reasons, he does the right thing.

God does not lose hope. He is persistent. Surely this is the example we should follow? Listen to that inner voice that is calling us to have compassion, to practice justice and to show genuine mercy? Our hope is in the God who does not give up on us, so keep listening and following his prompting!

There is so much more one can draw from looking at this parable from this perspective, but enough said!

MAEVE RACE

Kenilworth, United Kingdom

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I just want to thank NCR and Pat Marrin for the daily encouragement and inspiration I receive from his Pencil Preaching column and also his wonderful "Francis" comic strip. I struggle these days with being Catholic, but Pat reminds me of the good parts and the spirituality that I can't seem to find anywhere else.

I hope many other readers subscribe to his daily column!

CANDACE FISHER

Sarasota, Florida

Advertisement

Regarding the article "Notre Dame had a right to host Barr, but his talk was ridiculously stupid." My impression was that the headline was an exercise in faulty logic, or *argumentum ad hominem*.

Although the author didn't call Attorney General William Barr himself ridiculously stupid, he might as well have done just that. To say of someone "your talk was ridiculously stupid," says nothing that sheds any light on anything, and it likely will stop those who tend to disagree with you from reading further.

If we are to get back to reasonable public discourse, please let's try to keep insults and name calling out of the discussion — such talk has nothing to do with reasoned journalism.

RUSS BRUMM

Menasha, Wisconsin

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I just want to let you know how much I appreciated the article by Michael Sean Winters, particularly that it appeared in a Catholic-oriented publication.

I was so surprised by the speech and also struck by what I felt were its historical inaccuracies. I expected a more rigorous presentation from an attorney, as my view is that they are generally trained to a rigorous reference standard and more careful to be accurate.

As a practicing Episcopalian, I definitely believe in the value of religion, but as Winters noted, even in American, the religious freedom that I believe is one of our strengths has not always been available to all.

I simply wanted to let you know that if the article was an example of your thoughtful approach, I am grateful to have stumbled across your publication.

CONSTANCE MINER

Washington, D.C.

A response to "As US 'nones' increase, we must start asking different questions" by Jamie L. Manson.

About every 500 years, Western culture seems to experience a social revolution which includes the way we experience the world and organize society. I think we're going through one of those shifts now. Baby Boomers were the last generation to live according to old rules rooted in the 15th century. Gen X, Millennials and onward are moving us into what feels like an incoherent reality. No one in my generation knows the rules for the social order now emerging, so it feels like chaos — and will for a long time.

I only hope that a few of our elders can ride this new wave and help guide the thinking of the youngers. Pope Francis has a feel for it, but even he gets caught in his own history now and again. His great gift is his utter love for people.

I think that's the bridge from the old culture to the new. Walking with love and respect will help us elders move into the future without anger and bitterness. Unfortunately, our current American culture looks for scandals, not love. Maybe the witness of nuns embracing "nones" will help.

(Sr.) ANGELA M. HIBBARD, IHM

Detroit, Michigan

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I should begin by stating that I was born in Chicago in 1942, baptized and raised Catholic although my father was Lutheran (non-practicing).

I have loved the church all my life, while deploring certain decisions, actions, pronouncements of the hierarchy.

Why have the young turned away? I would say because the church has become irrelevant for them. In my opinion, it's not so much about affordable housing, full-time work, education costs and other similar concerns. It's not just about politics, dogma, race, politics, organizational issues, wealth or poverty. It is about gender issues, and the role of women.

It's about the new story that the church should be telling.

Because of the huge advances in science, technology, and especially astronomy, astro-physics, we now have a picture of the earth that is incredibly different from the world of just a few decades ago.

Much of our creed no longer makes sense in the light of our new understanding of how things have evolved.

For me, and I know for many others, this does not mean we have lost our faith. But it does mean that much of the dogma has lost meaning, and the official language used by the church, especially in its exclusivity, no longer rings true.

I don't think Jesus would be at all comfortable in a typical Catholic church today. There are some exceptions, but many parish communities seeking a more modern liturgy and path have been silenced, even broken up, by fearful bishops.

This is not how the young will be attracted to the church.

RUTH ZEMEK

Phoenix, Arizona

I couldn't agree more that we need to step up to "holy anger" whereas women we recognize that we have a voice and we need to use it. Being meek never cut it.

I am a spiritual director and a retired therapist. Women are coming in physically and emotionally sick over the injustices that they are living, seeing and hearing about. But they are afraid to step up because they were taught that "nice girls don't get angry" in life, and that they don't have a voice in the church.

What we don't get, we either act out (anger) or we act in (depression). Either way there is not a solution, just another issue to throw into that hole in our soul. Let's own it and make a choice about one thing we could do to resolve our anger as Chittister suggested in her excellent article.

RUTH M. BAKER

Prescott, Arizona

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I am thrilled to read the brilliant and creative thoughts of Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister. I think she hits it right on the nose.

I am appalled at the lack of real participation of women in the life of the church. It puts me off the church. It is insulting. I don't think Jesus meant things to go that way in the church for 2,000 years and beyond.

It is not just for me that I am insulted; it is for the whole body of Catholic women. Their silence is forcing me to speak out for them, out of respect for their hidden strength and gifts that are buried deep under the shroud of centuries.

MADELINE A. BRUCE

Nanaimo, British Columbia

The recent article on the German synod by Zita Ballinger Fletcher never explained what was controversial about the synod. I assume it was because the bishops were planning to meet with a lay organization to discuss the current state of the church in Germany.

If so, I think that point should have been make clearer for us "amateurs," since it is a very important and correct step to be taken. It would appear that the Germans recognize that the laity are the church as much as the clergy. Top down study and decision making is no longer acceptable and certainly not as effective as jointly attempting to discern where the Holy Spirit wants to take us.

JEAN SCHAEFFER

Lake Ridge, Virginia

Marianne Duddy-Burke's thoughtful piece on the trampling of free speech by Catholic employers is indeed disturbing.

I'm the pastor of a Catholic parish. What if one of my staff posts wedding photos of a gay son or daughter on Facebook? Is firing that person justified for publicly supporting what the church forbids?

Such principles extend to other areas. How about if one of my teachers is reported to me for publicly purchasing artificial birth control products at the local store? Or perhaps an employee gets ratted out for failing to implement the spirit of *Laudato Si*' and is throwing recyclables into the trash?

Where do we draw the line? At what point does Catholic teaching recognize common sense?

(Fr.) PAUL BOUDREAU

Pawtucket, Rhode Island

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