Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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March 13, 2020
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In case you missed it, a bit of controversy erupted in the Catholic Church amidst an article published Feb. 21 in Catholic News Agency. Pope Francis met Feb. 10 with some bishops for *ad limina* visits. The article reported that the pontiff had expressed to those bishops displeasure over how Jesuit Fr. James Martin had acted following a Sept. 30, 2019, meeting with Francis, during which the two discussed Martin's ministry to the LGBT community. Two bishops responded to that article in NCR's pages: Archbishop John Wester and Bishop Steven Biegler. NCR also wrote an

editorial about the topic, as did political columnist Michael Sean Winters. Letters to the editor are edited for length and clarity. To join the conversation, follow the steps below.

I want to thank Archbishop John Wester for calling out the innuendos and misrepresentations made by Catholic News Agency's editorial board and those who "reported" the story.



It is time all over the world for people to call out those who (to be blunt) lie. In the interest of being "kind and accepting," we have allowed lies to spew over not just our church but many other groups.

Our desire to avoid conflict is dangerous. Jesus never avoided conflict, in fact, he met it face on and challenged people to think about what they were doing. Kudos to Wester.

STEPHEN HEALY

Covington, Washington

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Thank you, Archbishop John Wester, for taking the time to clarify what was said. I am tired of the anti-Francis people trying to break the gospel momentum of Pope Francis.

NORBERT BUFKA

Midland, Michigan

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I commend you for publishing Archbishop John Wester's response to the anonymously sourced Catholic News Agency report concerning Pope Francis' remarks on the vital ministry of Jesuit Fr. James Martin.

The memorable observation that, "sunlight is the best disinfectant" is as true for our church as it is for our government.

I'm a committed Catholic who is pained by the deep inroads that conservative politics has made into the American Catholic Church. A great many Catholics mistakenly believe that right-wing politics represent gospel values.

Our church would be in a much better place had Pope Benedict XVI urged his bishops to emulate Catholic women religious rather than investigate them.

MARY ELLEN SINKIEWICZ

Boston, Massachusetts

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Thank you, Archbishop John Wester for speaking the truth from your head and your heart in regards to Jesuit Fr. James Martin. It seems that some "anonymous" bishops will do anything to have him discredited.

EILEEN SLEVA

Hillsboro, Oregon

Advertisement

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As a relatively new Christian, I read with great interest the response of Archbishop John Wester to the report from the Catholic News Agency concerning Jesuit Fr. James Martin.

What stands out, is the anonymity of CNA's report. In the secular world, it's bad enough when someone makes allegations, such as these, from behind a veil, but far worse when it's from several bishops.

Just looking at the CNA report alone elicits doubt on its veracity. Why did Pope Francis meet with such an outspoken defender of the LGBTQ community in such a visibly public manner at the Vatican? It could have been in private and gone unrecorded, but it wasn't. The pope knows very well what he is doing.

This manner of attempting to distort the pope's words, to suit the wants and desires of the conservative faction of the church, is becoming more commonplace. In this light, the author of this non-anonymous response, Wester, is well deserving of our support and admiration.

BRIAN RAHILLY

Trans Island, Montreal

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Thank you, Archbishop John Wester, for following your conscience and not allowing inaccurate reporting, misstatements and innuendo to stand unchallenged.

You and Sen. Mitt Romney are beacons of light in these dark times.

God bless you both.

MARY V. KOLESAR

Logan, Utah

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EWTN and its news agency need to be corrected by proper ecclesiastical authority on the basis of spreading false information (fake news) that damages the reputation of an outstanding priest — Jesuit Fr. James Martin.

They owe him (and Pope Francis) a public apology. They are dividing the unity of the Catholic Church which is a serious sin. I recommend canonical penance!

(Fr.) DANIEL E. DOYLE, OSA

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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I agree with Michael Sean Winters' analysis. What was done by "some bishops" and Catholic News Agency is flagrantly wrong and not Christian. Pity those Catholics who are "governed" by such as these. Perhaps it will be necessary to record all future ad limina meetings to deter the manipulative?

I applaud the rebuttals by named bishops, who were unwilling to let falsehoods stand. How sad it was needed.

I do not expect retaliation by Pope Francis. He has shown remarkable forbearance for bishops going off the reservation in ecclesial and theological matters, very unlike the way his two predecessors treated progressives. This may be taken as evidence that he is, in fact, a Christian.

Alas my sinful inclination would be, if in his place, to invoke the Argentinian inquisition and ruthlessly purge these elements. Also, emulating President Donald Trump, CNA (and probably EWTN) would no longer be credentialed for papal travel coverage.

CHAD DONOVAN

Cheshire, Connecticut

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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.

If the letter refers to a specific article published at ncronline.org, please send in the headline or the link of the article.

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