Opinion
News



by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

April 3, 2020
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

February was forever ago, right? Below are a sampling of letters written by NCR readers in the month of February 2020. To join the conversation, follow the rules listed below.

I so agree with Jamie Manson's column, "Trump's March for Life appearance calls into question bishops' motives."

How much more reasoned, logical proof do we need that the patriarchal "old boys' club" just shamelessly uses religion to keep their power? I wish I could laugh this off but it is just way too dangerous for women, children and men worldwide.

TERI CORSO

Newton, New Jersey

***

Having just finished Jamie Manson's column on Springfield, Illinois, Bishop Thomas Paprocki's publication concerning transsexual people, I am affirmed once again in my separation some 20 years ago from the institutional church.

As much as I appreciate the close friendships that I have with my Roman Catholic friends who are priests and religious, as well as my graduate education in a Roman Catholic university, I cannot remain an active member of an institution which is so backward, intransigent — and frankly, cruel — in its hierarchy's so-called pastoral approach to the challenges sexual minorities face. I see no connection to the Gospel in anything people like Paprocki have written on these subjects.

(The Rev.) LARRY HANSEN

Portland, Oregon

***

It is not just the present bishops. The desire to control women is baked into the Catholic psyche. When we celebrate a non-married female saint (the vast majority of those canonized), she is named first and foremost a virgin, then she's a martyr or a doctor of the church or a foundress or caregiver to the poor.

The most important virtue for a woman is not to have ever had sexual relations — a value not from Christ, but pre-Christian cultures where a woman's job was to produce legitimate heirs with the man whom her father had chosen. Are there any male saints who are labelled "virgins" in the ordo?

THOMAS HAYES

East Setauket, New York

***

Jamie Manson's commentary is so misguided and so confused that it illustrates why so many of our young people are so mixed-up. Her sympathies are so misplaced, I'm shocked that a Catholic medium would carry her.

JOAN MARTIN

Yonkers, New York

***

Here we read another compelling article about toxic attitudes and the darkness in the Catholic Church which overshadows the decency and active goodness displayed by many good priests and religious.



Jamie Manson demonstrates fearless challenges to Paprocki's extreme and unloving efforts to decry other human beings and their personal lives: all based on nothing less than a complete lack of humility, empathy and insight concerning his own and therefore others' humanity.

Will we ever understand such obsession within an institution with sex, sexuality and others' sexual preferences? The scriptures record Jesus asking others what he could

do for them, there is a distinct absence of initial questioning about their sexuality!

The final two paragraphs speak beautifully of Jamie's own faith and her resilient and generous spirit. In the same vein I was also reminded of her suggestions for church leaders in the final paragraph of her article "To have a truly just church Pope Francis must move beyond complementarity."

Such insights truly enliven and nourish my faith and I'm grateful for them.

VIVIENNE DRAY

Gravesend, England

***

I remember our parish priest advising my dad, a mechanical engineer, on how better he could make his designs.

A priest once told us in class that earthquakes in Japan were God punishing the Japanese for using birth control.

Happily, those days of comically unqualified clergy spouting off on all and every topic are long gone.

Or so I thought, until I hear of Bishop Thomas Paprocki and his catastrophically stupid opinions about our brothers and sisters in the LGBTQI community. Imagine your young son or young daughter, perhaps confused about their sexuality, or not, hearing his dopey but insidious views.

I would consider it an honor to be refused the Eucharist from this man and seek it from a priest who follows in the love of Christ.

PETER MANNING

Port Coquitlam, British Columbia

Who am I to talk about childbearing? I'm 69-years-old but the rest of my story sounds like your recent article about family size and global warming.

My husband and I took environmental issues and overpopulation seriously in the 1970s. We had two biological children and adopted six children, all older children. I wanted 10 biological children. I wanted a big family. My husband agreed.

Fifty years later, we have eight children of various ethnic backgrounds and 13 grandchildren. It was not easy. The church of our youth would have preferred that we had the 10 biological children or even more! Many times, I tried to encourage our diocesan paper to encourage adoption. I felt the door slam. We need a conciliar church to guide us and not condemn us. We need the support of a church community called to love radically.

JANET TULLO

Fishkill, New York

In the posting, "Bishop McElroy on voting with faith and a conscience," the bishop notes "at least ten salient goals [that] emerge from the Gospel and the long tradition of Catholic faith." He encourages voters to consider that:

"... character is an even more essential element in effective faith-filled voting at the present moment, and another reason why faith-filled voting cannot be simply reduced to a series of competing social justice teachings. In the end, it is the candidate who is on the ballot, not a specific issue."

I find that this is a bishop's address that I can mostly agree with.

The one glaring element with which I wholeheartedly disagree is in his noting that abortion seems in his mind and in the minds of most members of the hierarchy to persist as the number one issue. In fact, he cites the Democratic Party specifically as the enemy here. Unfortunately, this undercuts all his other points.

Not once does the bishop mention the Republican Party or call them to account on any of these "salient goals." I thought surely, he would mention the families torn apart, the children and babies that will never be reunited with their parents, the Dreamers in a perpetual state of limbo about their citizenship, the assault on sanctuary cities — all at the hands of the Republican Party.

So, once again, we are left with a false equivalency. A statistic of 750,000 abortions, without any reason given, he associates with the Democratic Party. What is absent is

the number of lives destroyed, compromised and demeaned by the Republican Party's total disregard for the other "salient goals."

CHERYLE BARTOLO

Poland, Ohio

***

Bishop Robert McElroy's talk on voting is definitely worth pondering as we try to decide for whom to vote in the primaries and general election this year. I totally agree that voters need to look at a candidate's practice of prudence and whether they seek the common good. Unfortunately, there are a number of politicians who denounce the common good as if it were something evil.

Abortion is a personal evil and cannot be solved or stopped by overturning *Roe* vs. *Wade* or making criminals of doctors and women. it is well known that when women have access to good pre-natal and post-natal care followed by health care, education and other life supporting programs, abortions decrease. A lack of these programs is a systemic evil.

Climate change is another systemic evil. Without systemic changes we are facing the real possibility of the end of humanity.

Systemic evil must be confronted and it supersedes personal evil.

NORBERT BUFKA

Midland, Michigan

***

Bishop Robert McElroy's statement said so many important things but he undermined this by contributing to the widespread belief that a total ban on all abortions for any reason is the one and only Catholic belief on abortion. This is erroneous. The Catholic tradition on this subject is more subtle, nuanced, and pluralistic. Ignoring that insults that great Catholic moral tradition.

The bishop should take instruction from the outstanding Dominican theologian, St. Antoninus (1389-1459). Antoninus, canonized in 1523, held that early abortions can

be justified when necessary to save the woman's life, not a rare exception in the medical conditions of the time. His view created no stir, since there were other notable theologians who agreed and allowed for this and a number of other exceptions permitting abortion.

Antoninus was not condemned by the hierarchy. Rather, he was appointed archbishop of Florence in 1446. When he died, Pope Pius II, in an outstanding eulogy, praised Antoninus as "a brilliant theologian and popular preacher."

In 1523, he was formally canonized as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church. His feast day is May 10, a day that pro-choice Catholics can remember and celebrate.

To ignore the pro-choice Catholic view on abortion and contraception belittles the Catholic tradition and contributes to the belief that the only issue on which Catholics are really morally serious is abortion.

DANIEL C. MAGUIRE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

***

The U.S. Catholic bishops have already decided they are all Republicans because of the "primacy" of anti-abortion activities. The bishops and other Catholic supporters of Republicans are wrong doctrinally, morally and factually in their position.

The bishops denigrate Pope Francis' teachings about the "seamless garment" of the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

Telling the Holy See it is doctrinally wrong on a question of faith and morals is grievous error and apostasy.

The bishops also contravene Jesus' own teaching that he and the church are "in and not of this world." Jumping full force into politics is both in and of the world and directly contradicts the Gospels.

But, when Republicans held majorities in both the U.S. House and Senate and the White House no one ever submitted a constitutional amendment to ban abortions but did have time to do so to ban same-sex marriages.

TIMOTHY E. HOGAN

Manchester, Missouri

***

The address of Bishop Robert McElroy should be required reading in every parish throughout the country. The political position chosen by so many people is frighteningly determined by the single issue of abortion, an issue I feel very passionate about, yet an issue that should not obscure the myriad of issues at stake in this year's 2020 election.

McElroy's address beautifully illustrates all of the issues a person in the voting booth needs to weigh before voting, something that can prevent us as a nation from making a single-issue mistake that we will have to live with for another four years. Parishes everywhere should reprint McElroy's address and make it available to all people of faith.

CHRISTOPHER SENK

Fort Myers, Florida

Advertisement

Just recently was released a book about Papa Francesco's very personal views — his own words — about St. John Paul II, the man and his legacy. Titled *St. John Paul the Great*, the book pushes "the great" honorific, extremely rare in the Roman Catholic Church, as a result highly complimentary, we might even say, adulatory.

St. John Paul II was not without his faults and sins, in particular, his failure to address the clerical sexual abuse crisis in a manner that sought to protect child and teenage victims and to advance their psychological recovery.

He was more interested in protecting the institution, that is, the Roman Catholic Church, in a manner that appears to reflect his misguided and culpable clericalism.

No doubt for many if not all victims of clerical sexual abuse under St. John Paul II, his obdurate, uncompromising, ill-conceived and destructive policy of protecting the institution to the grave prejudice and enduring harm of the victims grates painfully.

We surmise that the same is true for all victims of clerical abuse, sexual, otherwise or some combination thereof, under St. John Paul II's shortsighted, intransigent and willfully blind pontificate.

JOSEPH I. B. GONZALES

San Juan, Philippines

The editorial "Hypocrisy on display in Duquesne's religious liberty win" hits the nail on the head in its condemnation of the outcome of a lawsuit in which Duquesne University contested the formation of a union by its adjunct professors, claiming the right to prevent the union from forming, due to its being a private religious institution. This presents a classic case in which legality and morality diverge. While it is legally permissible for the university to prevent the formation of the union by its adjunct professors, the editorial makes it abundantly clear why this action is both hypocritical and immoral.

As the editorial points out, Duquesne is acting in direct opposition to long standing Catholic tradition that supports the formation of unions for the purposes of acquiring a just wage to support oneself and one's family, as well as, medical and pension benefits needed to survive in most economies.

This kind of hypocrisy is what may drive the institutional Catholic church into oblivion. Teaching and preaching involve much more than proclaiming eloquent documents like *Rerum Novarum*. The best teaching and preaching is backed up by the practical living of what has been taught. As St. Francis of Assisi told his friars, "Preach always. Use words when necessary." Would that Duquesne University learn this lesson.

THOMAS SEVERIN

Connellsville, Pennsylvania

***

Being labeled a hypocritical Catholic is equally unpleasant whether it comes from the right or left. Tagging that label on an institution like Duquesne University also feels unfair.

NCR's editorial ("Hypocrisy on display in Duquesne's religious liberty win") acknowledges the constitutional issues at stake in the recent United States Court of Appeals decision, stemming from an original union organizing case on Duquesne's campus. Duquesne voluntarily recognizes four unions on campus and is not so easily dismissed as anti-union or anti-church-teaching on unions. The question at some Catholic universities is less about unions as a larger reality and more about particular unions in particular situations, especially when the Catholic identity of an institution could be impacted.

Understanding the details of such situations will always be important before judging the hearts of those involved.

(Fr.) DENNIS HOLTSCHNEIDER, CM

President, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

I'm a frequent NCR reader who takes great encouragement from NCR's expansive view of the Catholic faith and the quality of your journalism.

I'm disturbed by your uncritical examination of the three right-wing hermits in the U.K.

I'm not a believer in excommunication but support it in this instance based on the hatred these folks have expressed to and for gay people and their public rejection and rebellion of Pope Francis.

The inclusion of ready made tweets of their quotes implies NCR's support for their

hateful, schismatic beliefs.

NCR, what are you thinking? If you won't take down the article, I urge you to remove the tweets.

MARY ELLEN SINKIEWICZ

Boston, Massachusetts

***

In the article from Religious News Service, the writer credits Pope Francis with the renewal of religious life (thus angering these strange hermits).

It was the Vatican II decree on religious life which started the renewal long before Francis came along. The leadership of religious women promoted the renewal of each group's charism sometimes in spite of the popes that preceded him. I suspect the writer might be too young to remember that?

(Sr.) MAUREEN CHICOINE, RSCJ

New Orleans, Louisiana

For years, I have followed Barna Group reading the results of their surveys. They do have a pulse on the Protestant church. However, now as a Catholic, one needs to be careful reading the Barna verbiage. Terms do not always translate from Protestant into Catholic usage equally.

Barna does not always name specifically which group is being addressed. Barna defaults on the term "Protestant" as any issue that does not include Roman Catholicism. Other times, it will use Protestant and non-mainline.

According to the report, three-quarters (72%) of Protestant pastors identify the impact of "watered down gospel teachings" on Christianity in the U.S. as a major

concern. That is especially true for pastors in non-mainline denominations (78%). Mainline pastors (59%) are less concerned.

I recommend using Barna as an extra-Catholic barometer. Issues and trends showed by Barna often are shared in the Catholic Church. Rarely are issues isolated to one denomination but are shared in one form or other. It would do our bishops and church leaders well to know what is happening in the larger world of which we are a part, not separate.

DAVID ARMSTRONG

Lee's Summit, Missouri

I am writing about your article "German theologian spearheads transition to a 'gender appropriate' Catholic Church."

I'm grateful there are some folks not settling for an incremental approach. The goal should be full equality. There should be women throughout the hierarchy and a real possibility that one could be pope.

The idea of pressing only for woman deacons, or for allowing some token women to vote at church councils is not sufficient as it equates to accepting several more generations of boys and girls being raised with the church teaching them by example that leadership roles belong primarily to men. All of society would continue to suffer. They have already spent years looking at the possibility of women deacons, something the church used to do. That decision should have been decided in favor of women deacons in a few seconds.

Those who applauded the appointment of the commission to study that issue should feel silly after seeing the non-result come years later. And please stop saying "it is not about power." Saying that over and over is not as attractive as many nuns think. It is about power as well as other things. It's about full equality, nothing less. And in a hurry! Where are the church's real ethicists?

GEORGE DESNOYERS

Chicopee, Massachusetts

***

In the article regarding discussions in Germany, there was mention that some might feel a "shock wave" coming from the German church. I would not feel a shock wave, but a breath of fresh air in its concern for the role of women.

(Fr.) TOM ZELINSKI

Washington, Michigan

***

The pope can raise the role of women in the governance of the church with a single sentence followed by his own actions. Declare that the papal electoral college shall consist of equal numbers of males and females. Appointing cardinal-electors afterwards is the prerogative of the pope alone.

The election of popes is entirely a matter of church law and discipline, not doctrine. It was once done by acclamation of Roman mobs. It has been changed many times. Even if the female electors are not part of the curia or ordinaries of dioceses, those ambitious to advance from those positions to the papacy will see the advantage of behaving as if they thought women were equal members of the church.

TOM POELKER

St. Louis, Missouri

The article, "Father Josh: A married priest in a celibate world" contains the following sentence: "In a Catholic world where debates over clerical celibacy have flared from Brazil to the Vatican, Joshua Whitfield is that rarest of things: A married Catholic priest." That sentence completely ignores the existence of the Eastern Churches of the Catholic Church.

In Eastern Catholic churches, married priests are not the "rarest of things," but are normal. And Eastern Catholic Churches are Catholic. So, that sentence is simply erroneous. Married priests are, indeed, rare in the Latin rite. But the Latin rite, although the largest rite, is not the only rite. All Catholics in the world are not Roman Catholics. There are countries in the world where Roman Catholics actually constitute the minority Catholic rite.

In the United States, there are many married Catholic priests who are not converts from the Episcopal church. They were originally ordained in the Catholic Church as married men — only not in the Latin rite.

I have written a previous letter to the editor about the fact that the National Catholic Reporter, for a reason that remains incomprehensible to me, chooses to make believe that the Roman Catholic Church, the Latin rite, is the only one that matters, the only one that merits any consistent coverage, and that it represents the universal Catholic church.

You have an opportunity to educate your readers by being careful about the language that you use. It's truly sad that you choose not to do so.

TATIANA B. DURBAK

Ewing, New Jersey

I just finished reading the article "After abuse scandals, seminarians pledge to 'get it right.' " I was stunned by the photos: seminarians in a classroom with the black suits and probably cassocks and Roman collars. I felt like it was a photo taken in the 50s.

I'm wondering what is their curriculum, what textbooks are they using, who are their professors and where do they come from? I was also taken aback by the statement, "gay men not allowed." It sounds like they have a contagious disease. There a many gay priests and bishops who are faithful to their vocation. I am glad that the seminarians from my diocese do not attend that seminary.

(Sr.) ELAINE COUTU, CSJ

San Jose, California

Michael Sean Winters' column "Can anyone beat Trump?" caught the eye of this Wisconsinite, as there are certain things that politicians and pundits should know about us Badgers.

I believe that Hillary Clinton lost Wisconsin in 2016 for one simple reason: she took us for granted and we don't like that. She did not even once visit Wisconsin during her campaign. I believe that even one visit to a city like Eau Claire, La Crosse,

Wausau, Green Bay or Appleton would have given her a win here — despite her "basket of deplorables" remark, which I believe also helped to seal her defeat.

Also, for the upcoming election, there is something that I wish the Democratic Party would realize. The Catholic vote is crucial and the absolute refusal of party leaders to give pro-life Democrats a voice alienates many Catholic voters who are on the fence. A simple acknowledgement that it is okay to be pro-life and a Democrat could make a world of difference and help to rid us of the worst president this country has ever had.

Fr. WILLIAM MENZEL

Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

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.

We cannot publish everything. We will do our best to represent the full range of letters received. Here are the rules:

Letters to the editor should be submitted to letters@ncronline.org.

Letters to the editor should be limited to 250 words.

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.

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 submission will receive careful consideration.

Published letters may be edited for length and style.

This story appears in the **Your thoughts** feature series. View the full series.