News



by NCR Staff

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In a recent editorial, we wrote that "Catholics who bought the single-issue strategy find themselves stuck in what once was a fun house now turned house of horrors, incongruously lashed to Trump, while the daily reality is a grim report of the spiraling number of sick and dying." Following are letters to the editor written by NCR readers in response to that editorial. Letters have been edited for length and clarity. You can join the conversation by following the steps below.

I applaud your editorial "Catholics and Trump, a reckoning."

It is absolutely astonishing to me that Roman Catholics of any ilk, let alone certain bishops, would foster a single life issue as the only reason to vote for anyone — let alone a man who at his best is a narcissist, and at worst, a malignant narcissist who cares not a whit about any life other than his own.

I am a big believer in the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin's "seamless garment" approach to respect for life. His statements attest to the fact that all lives are sacred — that means all humans, all races, cultures, religions, every single person.

Our current president does not give a whit about children languishing in detention, he does not give a whit about those who are vulnerable, hungry, homeless, disabled, elderly with no one to help them, or those who might be subject to the death penalty.

I shudder to think what Jesus would say to President Donald Trump and his sycophants, if he returned to earth right now. And I shudder more to think that what happened to Jesus the first time he walked the earth fully human, would most likely happen to him again because Trump would find him a "disloyal threat."

I pray every day that the Holy Spirit will do for the United States of America in November 2020, what the Holy Spirit did in providing us with the gentle, Jesus-centered shepherding of Pope Francis!

MARY WUDTKE

Chicago, Illinois

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I believe that the American hierarchy's grasp for power in the "public square" reflects a far more serious dry rot that has been growing for a long time.

Put simply, it is this: the estimable good works of the American church — hospitals, schools and the like — have come at a silent, hidden cost; namely, the creeping linkage between church leadership and the Republican Party.

Opposition to abortion is only the latest manifestation of this alliance.



The true foundation of the pairing is more mundane: the need for cash to keep the engine of "the works of the church" in gear.

Republicans tend to have more money — lots of it. What bishop can resist; after all, isn't his diocese doing good work, as Christ would wish?

Too true, but even this long-standing goodness may be hurtling toward a reckoning. Jesus, after all, promised that even the best of us could look forward to being painfully clipped, so that they could eventually "bear more fruit" (John 15:2).

I believe that the current worldwide pandemic, like 9/11, will turn our worlds upside down and in many unpredictable ways.

This, I would suggest, is the reckoning that is about to hit the American church. And it will not necessarily be a "cleansing of the temple." It could be so deep and broad that it could even rewrite or even sweep away much that is, and has been, good about American Catholicism.

STEPHEN CONNOR

Toronto, Canada

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Long ago I met a headline editor for a major newspaper. I learned her job was to make the headline fit the allotted space while giving a"'come on, read me" nudge to the reader. I realized that just as a picture is worth a thousand words, a headline can

steer the reader on how to read the article. Headlines create slant.

Your headline "Catholics and Trump, a reckoning" exacerbates the polarization which someone else might have started but you are now certainly fostering. Is that good journalism? I know many Catholics against and many for Trump.

PETE SUARE

Miami, Florida

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I am more and more shocked and amazed at the way our national conversation is going.

Yes, President Donald Trump is not perfect — nor is anyone else — but for you to publish this piece is really bad taste and manners.

Would you rather have us vote for any Democrat? This is no longer the country where I arrived back in 1951.

Shame on all of us.

CLARA M. GRAFF

Sarasota, Florida

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I was glad to see another article about one-issue voting and what Catholics need to face: it elected one of the most immoral, dishonest men to be president as a result. But National Catholic Reporter now acts as if they have no culpability here. You do because you toed the official line in condemning abortion except in rape or incest. You, whose writers say often how they are among the progressives of the Catholic world, forgot about primacy of conscience. What do you know about pregnancy and birth? I saw only one article in all the years I have read NCR that told the other side of the abortion choice, that told about all the women who have died and who will die from botched abortions without the right to choose for themselves. I can say this because I am the mother of seven really remarkable children. But if you think that I and my body never rebelled over the multiple pregnancies and the prospect of

nurturing and raising one more human being, you are in denial. You have been one-sided too.

Being a Catholic woman, and I am cradle Catholic, has meant that I remain faithful because the church is the holder of the truth. I have remained faithful even though neither me nor my daughters could not be priests, nor even deacons. I'm hanging on by my fingernails now, because my own primacy of conscience tells me I have believed in a Trojan horse.

LYDA LOMBARDO

Tampa, Florida

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Some of us have known for several years that our narcissist-in-chief would never comprehend the rules

of a pandemic, nor listen to superb medical instruction from viral experts like Dr. Anthony Fauci. For a massively contagious virus like COVID-19, 20 times more infectious than the flu, one carrier without symptoms can infect dozens of people near him.

A narcissist cannot be a leader because it is all about him, no empathy, awarding himself a 10 out of 10 grade for managing the crisis. I particularly liked your linking of the 2016 election of President Donald Trump to the Catholic vote, 52% for Trump, 53% for Obama back in 2012. This came from the "informed conscience" pronunciations from the U.S. bishops' conference that abortion is the preeminent issue of their vote. And pro-life judges.

We read that the recent U.S. bishops' meeting meeting on the preeminent issue for 2020 is abortion that the vote count was 149 to 63. That meant that 63 bishops don't agree.

JOHN MINCK

Palo Alto, California

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I read this with saddened satisfaction that, at long last, a credible Catholic source has opened its eyes to the damage that uncritical, one-issue voting has done to your country and to the world.

There's almost no excuse for your editorial board to have ignored for 30 years the liberating feminist theology that enabled many of us to unmask the rigid patriarchal structures of Roman Catholicism that promulgated the mistaken teachings that have influenced the social and political policies leading to President Donald Trump.

For 25 years, Catholics for Choice has published the splendid magazine Conscience.

Intellectual leaders such as yourselves, who avoided straight talk on sexual issues, LGBT and abortion particularly, bear some responsibility for the shame which now covers a lot of U.S. Catholics, looking at the man they contributed heavily to electing.

ROSEMARY GANLEY

Peterborough, Ontario

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The editorial staff of NCR are a collective conscious crowd of crybabies. They are a myopic miserable mindset mistreating the magisterium and mudslinging the president of the United States. Your editorial demonstrates dislike, disgust and defamation of both.

You defend your position without any direct defining of details as you emotionally, with bias negativity, hang dangling deceptive innuendos. Pridefully assuming your pursuit of truth and your understanding is superior to the church or the many successes in so many areas the president has accomplished in his first term.

Who is the voice engaged in fevered distortions of the truth? Who is the voice that is dangerous and destructive? Is your voice inspired by the immediacy of intimacy with

God? Is your voice the infinite intelligence? Is your knowledge, understanding and opinions superior and absolute?

All of you who collaborated on the Catholic Trump editorial are prideful egotists espousing emotional emptiness.

GARY TAYLOR

Holton, Indiana

Advertisement

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I too agree that the certain sects within the Catholic Church have played a big role in letting this particular president go unchecked only to secure a more conservative judgeship throughout America.

If only said sect was this resilient in correcting the sex abuse scandals that continues to gnaw at society as they were on that one issue of abortion. If they did, just maybe the church would have a better leg to stand on to outwardly oppose the countless amount of non-Christian things this president has done since taking office.

What if the same conservatives judges decided to properly go after the abuser within the church, what then?

DARYL JACKSON

Pelham, New York

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Oh how I long for a Catholic Church that cherishes life as much as it cherishes potential life!

Many Catholics have substituted devotion to the anti-abortion movement for the far greater challenge of caring for their lesser brethren. I hold the clergy accountable for those misguided souls who believe their political faith ensures their salvation while they ignore the poor, the hungry, the infirm and the refugee.

DEBORAH KENT

Louisville, Kentucky

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The grave error of a single-issue strategy by the Catholic hierarchy (and other Christians) has been more than a strategy: it has been fetal idolatry. As I learned from the nuns 60 years ago, "idolatry" is when something — even something good — takes precedence over God.

When was the last time a bishop refused communion to someone who dumped manufacturing chemicals into a river? Or when a Catholic business leader lobbied for lower taxes for the rich paid by cuts to SNAP, or social services, or access to health care? Or a manufacturer of assault weapons sold largely to the public rather than the military? Or given the church's fixation on sex, someone who remarried without an annulment? Or a Catholic governor who facilitates an execution?

It is not God who is wounded, it is ourselves, our understanding of morality and our church.

PAULINE BAILEY

Stamford, Connecticut

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The editorial suggests that those who voted for President Donald Trump based on a single issue (abortion) hoping for a pro-life president should be disappointed based on his handling of the COVID-19 virus. The implication is that he is responsible for all of the deaths from the virus because of his slow response and not taking the virus seriously.

Yet when he put a travel ban on China in place, he was labeled xenophobic by some Democrats and some on mainstream media.

I would challenge the people behind this editorial piece to ask the 60-plus million victims of abortion if Hillary Clinton or Joe Biden or any of the many candidates originally running for president on the Democratic ticket would have supported their right to life. If you are not given the chance to be born, what does it matter what other life issues you might have faced?

VINCE GRANACHER

Jasper, Indiana

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The big prize in national elections is swing voters in swing states. Those voters are midwestern Catholics, who used to lean Democratic by 12%; now they lean Republican by 2% in states President Donald Trump won by a hair.

Please, no clichés about "working class" or "rust belt," for, on average, Catholics are more wealthy than most Americans. Journalists spill much ink about white Evangelicals, who are actually irrelevant because they always vote Republican and live mainly in red states. Secular journalists were not watching when, for example, President Donald Trump showed up for a standing ovation at Phyllis Schlafly's funeral in the magnificent St. Louis Cathedral, broadcast live on the traditionalist Eternal Word Television Network — whose cultural programs are watched by many progressive Catholics sated with pop tart liturgies served up by aging fans of the St. Louis Jesuits. Trump seduced the congregation with, "I am pro-life."

A salt-of-the-earth bishop, Kenneth Povish of Lansing, once warned, "You cannot be a single-issue voter, because, then, they've got you." His colleagues didn't listen.

Some comfy Catholics are behaving like social Darwinists. They talk like the rich are the blest, which, as the "gospel of wealth," is a corrupt derivation of Protestant individualism.

Catholic teaching about the mystical body of Christ and the social gospel derived from that dogma implies communitarian ethics. If American Catholic leadership re-enables the GOP, they may be shunned as in Ireland, Quebec, and many European

countries — not because of some sinister secular conspiracy, but because of their grievous, public sin.

CONRAD L. DONAKOWSKI

Okemos, Michigan

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I applaud your editorial: "Catholics and Trump, a reckoning." I often talk to friends and family about being cautious when it comes to voting for a candidate based on one issue. Our Roman Catholic Church stands for so many things. To mention just a few: compassion, empathy, love, charity and good will toward our fellow citizens.

Please consider character and integrity in choosing your candidate. Thank you, National Catholic Reporter, for publishing this thoughtful editorial.

CAROLYN MILLER

Saint Helens, Oregon

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Thank you for validating my feelings and writing the truth. I don't know exactly when or how I found NCR, but it has been tremendously comforting for me ever since. I had been questioning whether I wanted to remain a Catholic because of the support by so many in the church for this incompetent, amoral con man who has all of the qualities that we as Christians are supposed to reject. The constant lying, gaslighting, blaming everyone else for everything, making everything about himself is quite frankly nauseating to watch every day.

But even worse are the lawless enablers he has surrounded himself with. President Donald Trump is toxic to the soul, as are those who support him and spew hateful right-wing extremist rhetoric within our church.

Clearly many of us did not need the pandemic to discover his utter incompetence, his constant lying, his lack of empathy and his vengefulness.

I have become a supporter of NCR and you should know that you may have helped an almost-lost sheep remain in the flock.

JACKI FARHOOD

Bethesda, Maryland

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Thank you so much for publishing this editorial.

It needs to be said, and loudly, that all life, at all stages, at all levels of ability and among all creatures of God's creation deserve our care, protection and efforts to not only survive, but to thrive! Our moral responsibilities must not be narrowed to one issue.

AGNES RICHARD

Ontario, Canada

Join the Conversation

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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.

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