Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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The involvement of Catholic clergy in political causes continues to be the topic of conversation on NCR's site in regards to that now perhaps famous phone call President Donald Trump held with several Catholic bishops, and other leaders. As promised, here are responses to our editorial, "Dolan delivers the church to Trump and the GOP." Letters have been edited for length and clarity.

This is a heartbreaking editorial, but at last I have been freed of ever giving the church another chance. Decades ago, my mother said to me, "The church is your birthright and you have as much right to it as the pope." At nearly 70 years of age, I have believed that idea.

Now, however, the birthright is of no consequence to me. I refuse to associate with the unceasing level of moral corruption and blind stupidity which characterizes the church.

To support President Donald Trump and the GOP in the name of a position on abortion is the height of both naivete and hypocrisy. If the church wanted to diminish abortion, it would be the champion of contraception. But, the church's stance is grounded in a grotesque misunderstanding of human physical intimacy and the desire to hold power over people's lives. I now know there will never be any maturity or wisdom coming from within the church.

I'm done, and in a strange way, feel quite free.

ELAINE McINTOSH

Shawnee Mission, Kansas



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As a practicing Catholic, a psychotherapist, a life-long educator and a spiritual director of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, I am horrified at the words and behavior of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan.

I am forever at a loss to try to understand how anyone can be a follower of President Donald Trump. He is unstable, lacking in basic knowledge of geography, history and science, focused exclusively on money, attention and power, and an egocentric pernicious liar. As such, he is a danger, not just to the United States, but to the whole world. I am a Canadian and I cringe at what he says and does.

I am ashamed of Dolan. While I, too, am against abortion, there are many other issues that need to be taken under consideration in any situation.

CATHERINE CHERRY

Dorval, Quebec

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I have been barely hanging on to any ability to believe in the U.S. Four great years of friendships and college in the States in the '60s. That country is gone.

Now this from New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan? President Donald Trump is a disgusting human being and the color of disgust just rubbed off on the scarlet robes of his eminence. The U.S. is the laughing stock of the world under Trump, you know that of course. But giggles give way to tears now.

God bless America? No, no. God save America. Prayers continue for you from up here in Canada.

PHILIP CARNEY

Kingston, Ontario

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As a faithful practicing Catholic I was absolutely appalled, angry and disgusted in reading this editorial. I cannot understand how any church leaders can give support to the most corrupt, lying, incompetent president in the entire history of the United States. I hope and pray that church members do not accept these statements.

The bishops have absolutely no right to tell people how to vote and I feel very sorry that the church has come to this.

MARY ENGLERTH

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

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The editorial concerning New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan and his support of President Donald Trump is right on target.

Abortion has been the sole issue for the church hierarchy. Sad to say, it is not about a "right to life" since they (bishops) do not address the issue of capital punishment or other life issues, just abortion. Quite honestly, their very open support of Trump should be reason enough that their tax exempt status should be questioned and even potentially withdrawn by the IRS. The bishops have every responsibility of helping us form our conscience, but then they must let us act upon our own conscience, not theirs. They are not responsible for my salvation: Jesus already did that!

The bishops have failed to speak about Trump's sexism (of course a number of them have safeguarded sexual predators so it may be hard to be a beckon of light in that world). They have failed to address his comments about immigrants — even Pope Francis commented about the "wall." Too bad the bishops do not have the courage of Francis.

JIM OFFENBERGER

Vienna, West Virginia

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This article absolutely makes my blood boil. New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan has no right to bring the Catholic Church into this political fray. It's one thing to remind parishioners that we are exhorted to pray for our leaders, but he should have left it there.

This president thrives on adulation. He loves you when you love him and that is where it begins and ends. Eventually there will be a leader in the church that will say or do something that he doesn't like and perceives as being a slight against him and suddenly his ego is bruised and he goes on rampage against the individual or

organization. Most recently, his beloved Fox News came under fire because they pushed back against his stupid comments about disinfectant. His so-called pledge to help failing Catholic schools will come at a cost to the church.

I will not vote for President Donald Trump because I believe he is a dangerous individual who does not know what he is doing, does not care about America and most of all because he is only providing lip service to the pro-life movement. Trump only does what is good for Trump!

CATHERINE BURKE

Pasadena, Maryland

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How in the world anyone can call this capricious, vindictive, spiritually corrosive, malignant narcissist in the White House a "great gentleman" is beyond me. The fact that this praise comes from a Roman Catholic cardinal makes my head want to explode! The followers of the current occupant in the White House walk in the shadow of shattered, ignored standards of truth. The Roman Catholic cardinal is supposed to be a follower of the one who said, "I am the truth."

Truth may be elusive at times. But living in the shadow of the greatest liar on the planet is not where a prince of the church should be.

MARYLYN FELION

Omaha, Nebraska

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During the pontificate of a previous pope (St. John Paul ll) priests were forbidden from running for and holding public office (see Canon 285), as these were seen to be "unbecoming" or "foreign to the clerical state." I clearly recall when a priest in my province of Saskatchewan had to refrain from running for re-election as a result.

Yet now in your country some of the highest-ranking clergy in the U.S. are clearly aligning themselves with a political party and not a sound from the Vatican. To be fair, this unholy alliance of church and state is not new and has occurred and does still occur in countries all over the world, so perhaps it is so pervasive that the

Vatican cannot even hope to try to correct it.

I am so weary of the hypocrisy in our church.

KATHERINE CAMERON

Regina, Saskatchewan

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"The capitulation is complete. Without a whimper from any of his fellow bishops, the cardinal archbishop of New York has inextricably linked the Catholic Church in the United States to the Republican Party and, particularly, President Donald Trump."

So begins NCR's editorial that made me absolutely sick to my stomach and ashamed of belonging to the same church as Dolan.

It is incredibly scandalous for a church leader to align himself with a paper thin-skinned megalomaniacal narcissist.

NCR would do a great service to the American Catholic Church to begin a petition to Pope Francis to excommunicate New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan and replace him with someone who exemplifies rather than trashes Christian values.

KENNETH R. JONES

Silver Spring, Maryland

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For a second time, you have demonstrated your intellectual ignorance as you write an editorial attacking the magisterium with emotions and speculated stupidity. Editorializing with suggestive slants and deception, you interpret human encounters so unprofessionally. Promulgating your understanding of the meeting of human beings myopically misinterpreting their encounter and diagnosing the human and dignified treatment the bishops gave to President Donald Trump with disgust, self-righteous judgment and slander.

GARY TAYLOR

Holton, Indiana

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This is the last straw!

Do the bishops really think that intelligent, informed Catholics will stand for this? I've been on the brink of leaving for some time, but this is unconscionable! We should all take New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan to task for this blatant dereliction of his office as shepherd.

Countless faithful Catholics have been excommunicated for less crimes than this. He must be held accountable. What kind of church is he promoting? I don't know how people can say they want to be Catholic with such a leader as this. What would Jesus say?

This makes me sick to my stomach. I can hardly stand it. I hope people will protest in force. I am 83 years old, but I've had enough.

MARY JEAN SMITH

Barron, Wisconsin

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I am Catholic and New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan is not the face of universal Christianity much less Catholicism but of American Christianity.

American Christianity, as the name suggests, is an ideology of racism, hierarchy, patriarchy and xenophobia. Christianity is only a mask for hate, racism and bigotry. This Christianity is pro-life but only insofar as it excludes capital punishment and caging of kids in detention camps. American Christianity is about power and domination. Do not misconstrue it with Jesus of Nazareth — the guy that is famous for compassion, mercy and forgiveness.

Recall historian Vincent Harding's rebuke:

> We first met the American Christ on slave ships. We heard his name sung in hymns of praise while we died in our thousands, chained in stinking holds beneath the decks, locked in with terror and disease and sad memories of our families and homes. When we leaped from the decks to be seized by sharks we saw his name carved in the ship's solid sides. When our women were raped in the cabins they must have noticed the great and holy books on the shelves. Our introduction to this Christ was not propitious. And the horrors continued on America's soil.

Dolan does not speak for Catholicism (and of the church fathers) and thank God definitely not for Jesus of Nazareth. If he did, I will personally denounce that Jesus and have no business with him. American Christianity is sexist, xenophobic, cruel, oppressive. This Jesus has no business with redemption. That is Dolan's Jesus and ultimately the image of the American Christ. He is no savior of mine.

MICHAEL ONYEBUCHI EZE

Cambridge, England

Advertisement

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Thank you for your editorial. Your leadership in addressing genuine Catholic issues (actually what should be the concerns of people of all faith traditions) is inspiring.

I have been bemoaning for years the lack of a voice by the American bishops. But with New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, we now have a loud voice, just contrary to everything we believe and everything we are taught in the gospels.

Anyone who has observed Dolan knows that he is as big a charlatan as President Donald Trump. The way to get Dolan's attention is to turn on a TV camera. But it is frightening that he too seems to have credibility with so many people.

How long will we endure the silence from so many of our "leaders" and "pastors" regarding abused children, immigrants, refugees, the poor, climate change, the treatment of women, etc.? How long will we be forced to limit respect for life to only

the unborn and not the aged, the infirm, the homeless, the lonely, etc.?

I love my church. Quarantine has given me the gift of more time to read, to pray, to reflect and to celebrate liturgy, albeit remotely. But I am embarrassed by Dolan and the rest. He may think that he has "delivered" the Catholic Church but if he looks beyond the bright lights and cameras, his church is empty.

JACK P. CALARESO

Reading, Massachusetts

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First, President Donald Trump corrupted elements of the Republican Party. Then he corrupted the entire Republican Party. Then he corrupted the Evangelical Protestants. Then he set about to corrupt the Constitution. He corrupted our culture with his obscene and bigoted language.

And now he has come for the bishops. They have been played just like the once admired military leaders, political leaders and good people who have come into his orbit. A sad, sad day for the American church, left without moral leadership.

JOHN BROCK

White Bear Lake, Minnesota

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The U.S. Catholic Church is internally schismatic. There are in effect two churches: the majority "anonymous" believers, found at most Sunday Masses, and the wealthier, more elite and often radically "traditional" middle-class-and-up, who are virtually all Republicans.

In my view, New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan has in fact "re-delivered" this second "church" to President Donald Trump.

Hence the cardinal's words and behavior toward Trump are far less earth-shaking than they may appear: the second "church" was "delivered" to Republican wealth many years ago. Dolan, for whatever motive or excuse, has merely renewed the second, smaller church's indissoluble marriage to the poisoned chalices of wealth

and power.

STEPHEN CONNOR

Cobourg, Ontario

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I have had it with the media in this country and that includes the National Catholic Reporter.

Bashing anyone who compliments President Donald Trump is about par for the course. New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan was not capitulating to the Republican Party by a single complimentary statement about our president. That is a nonsensical statement. I am a lifelong Catholic and he is the only president that has come out as pro-life in recent years. By pro-life, I mean someone who is willing to put themselves on the line in both words and in actions.

Of course, you have become such a liberal publication, you simply follow the Democratic pied pipers and close your eyes to the anti-life agenda of those persons supporting abortion up till and after birth. The liberals of this country do not allow any other voice but their own.

I'll guarantee that if you came out against abortion, your publication would be roasted alive by the very progressive readers to whom you pander. And if you found even one single thing to support our president for, your online publication would suddenly drop to the bottom of the Google search engine.

Open your eyes. Who has capitulated? It is not Dolan; it is the National Catholic Reporter!

BARBARA SMITH

Boise, Idaho

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It would be presumptuous to try to add context to this brilliantly written article. I can only give a personal opinion that New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan has harbored in the back of his mind for a long time the idea that he could become the first U.S.

pope. And like all conservatives, he misreads support for moral choices to mean support for rigid authoritarian control.

I also suspect that he believes that the College of Cardinals will be looking for a leader with more conservative credentials after Pope Francis. I doubt the cardinals, finding themselves in the middle of financial, health and environmental crises, will be looking for a conservative to lead them out of the desert.

I must add that I was hurt to see that Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley joined in the rally. I had always had great respect for his positions before.

DANIEL GEWARTOWSKI

Boca Raton, Florida

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Hours of empty sheltering at home during the coronavirus pandemic has given me plenty of time to think. I am a Catholic, non-practicing for years. I started watching the livestreamed Masses from St. Patrick's in New York City and my religion and curiosity, coincidentally, has begun to stir again.

There was a jovial, cherub-like manner about New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan that was so comfortable, so I have sought more.

One week at online Mass, Dolan sent a shout out to President Donald Trump and then Melania for her birthday. I was appalled that a man of God would deign to mention this vile, unfit liar in any positive way. I immediately closed out of the website and haven't been back. I'm half surprised that the roof didn't fall in!

This has been very disturbing and I've been thinking about it for several days. Did I hear it right? Was I too hasty? I don't know. And then today, I found your article. Thank you! It is what I have thought of Trump all along. And unfortunately, I guess I heard the cardinal correctly, too. I am beyond nauseated. But I had no idea, just coming back to the church, that all of this other stuff with Dolan has been going on. This casts a distinctly different light on him.

CECELIA NORWID

Griswold, Connecticut

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In the swing state of Michigan, which President Donald Trump won by a hair, there appeared a few years ago among letters to the editor of the Lansing State Journal, a plaint from a Catholic woman. She was puzzled because the church, which she loves, seems to align its teaching with that of Rush Limbaugh.

The salt-of-the-earth Lansing Bishop Kenneth Povish (1975-1995) used to warn that, "You cannot be a single-issue voter, because then they've got you."

CONRAD L. DONAKOWSKI

Okemos, Michigan

***

The Catholic Church was once a part of my life. My maternal grandparents were good Catholics and they were Democrats in the era of President John F. Kennedy. I loved the church — the beauty, ritual and tradition of the service. How times have changed.

I come from a religiously divided household, my dad was a Seventh Day Adventist, my mom was Catholic. When I turned 18, I chose the Catholic Church for myself. I studied and was baptized. I was married in the church and our daughter was baptized Catholic.

But then the church began to change. I was having a hard time connecting to it. I quit attending for a while but, after Sept. 11, 2001, I really felt the need to connect spiritually. I returned for a Sunday Mass and was bitterly disappointed. The sermon was on abortion statistics. Literally percentages. It was all I could do to not get up and walk out. That was not what I was looking for. Religion should nurture you

spiritually, not politically. I haven't been back since.

The church is overlooking the anti-Christian behavior of this narcissistic, rude, bully of a man to support the one-item agenda of the church.

LINDA FAHRENBRUCH

Broomfield, Colorado

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Well, yes and no.

Judging by the number of people in churches these days, I don't believe the "church" has been delivered. Maybe segments of the hierarchy and their apparatchiks (i.e a blindly devoted official, follower, or member of an organization).

Though it is disheartening for those of us who reject the president's agenda, mindset, morals, scruples and lack of human understanding that members of the exalted hierarchy cozy up to such a one, I believe the remaining thinking, reasoning and faith-filled followers of Christ do not agree. We have amply demonstrated our capacity and intellect to not follow that which is not applicable to our faith.

As in the Gospel, we come to Jesus and plead that we may see or be freed from that which cripples us. He heals us, noting our faith has saved us, and then we must stand up and walk on our own, despite the protestations of the crowd and righteous ones. Carl Jung might call it, our ability to be our own true self.

The cardinals have played their hands, laid down their cards. Our faith enables us to see. We will not be crippled by their card game.

One more thing, isn't Joe Biden the one who is Catholic? Interesting. The cardinals will toady up to an insulting, lying, rich, distasteful non-Catholic, yet will abandon one of their own. So much for shepherding the flock.

DAVE MURRAY

Cedarville, Michigan

***

In reflecting on the issue of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan with President Donald Trump, I find it quite offensive. Certainly, Dolan has the personal right to vote as he sees fit and to choose the friends he desires. However, as his public position is representative of the church, I feel this very public action was quite imprudent.

Trump does not appear to value the mission of Jesus. I say this because of his cruel treatment of immigrants, his apparent racial bias, his denial of climate change and his misogynistic attitude toward women, to name just a few incidents. While he speaks "pro-life," his actions show a vagrant disregard for life.

Jesus' values are clearly articulated in the Gospels. Trump's actions do not align with these Gospel values.

I am proud to sign the letter to Dolan expressing disapproval of his support of Trump.

(Sr.) CATHE SHOULBERG, RSM

North Wales, Pennsylvania

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After reading this article, I have now officially left the Catholic Church. I suggest that the government start taxing all churches especially the Catholic Church. Separation of church and government is no longer. If the Catholic Church wants to give up their ideals for abortion issues and money from federal government to keep Catholic schools in operation then they have sold their souls.

I say tax the churches. The Catholic Church is very wealthy and does not use its wealth for the poor, the sick, the elderly and the dying. President Donald Trump and the GOP do not care about the elderly and want to take away Social Security and Medicare, something that the elderly have paid into their entire lives. When the church gets involved with the government there are many, many issues that they will have to take sides on and that takes away the separation of church and state.

So have at it Catholic Church and all other churches that want to get involved with the election and the government process. You will now and should be taxed.

KATHRYN M. SULLIVAN

Lemoyne, Pennsylvania

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New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan is not delivering the church, the Democratic Party is. Their party platform demands unfettered access to abortion at the cost of taxpayers, the recognition of same-sex marriages and severe limits on religious freedom.

Dolan is friendly with New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a self-professed Catholic. He has lit up the Freedom Tower to celebrate abortion and infanticide, has told the religious folks who oppose the redefinition of marriage that there is no place for them in New York and in fighting the coronavirus, he stated that it is hard work and science that prevails, not God and faith. His views are consistent with the Democratic Party platform.

The editors should reflect on the two main themes of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: The first is that we are called to be Catholics first and partisans second. Second, note what the document consistently says about abortion, euthanasia, human cloning and embryonic research:

> Such actions are so deeply flawed. ... These are called "intrinsically evil" actions. They must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned. ... It is a mistake with grave moral consequences to treat the destruction of innocent human life merely as a matter of individual choice. A legal system that violates the basic right to life on the grounds of choice is fundamentally flawed"

Any Catholic of good conscience recognizes that the Democratic Party is fundamentally flawed and needs to be opposed.

STEPHEN G. KENNY

Spring Lake, New Jersey

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