Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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Our readers are still talking about the involvement of Catholic clergy in political causes in regards to that phone call President Donald Trump held with several Catholic bishops, and other leaders. Here are responses specific to NCR executive editor Heidi Schlumpf's column, "When church leaders sound like presidential apologists." Letters have been edited for length and clarity.

I'm not sure that church leaders are acting like presidential apologists as much as they are reacting in support of a president who has finally done something for Catholics, their pro-life agenda, and their schools.

Rather than twisting our "seamless garments" into a knot, perhaps some Catholic leaders recognize we finally have a president that will do something for real Catholic concerns, not sophistic attempts to bless the rest of the agenda of a party that routinely ignores Catholic concerns.

JOHN M. GRONDELSKI

Falls Church, Virginia

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A friend posted a link on Facebook to your New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan news article with her comments. Intrigued, I clicked on the link.



To say I was incensed is an understatement. I diligently searched the archdiocesan website without finding a way to contact the cardinal, so I used the only one I could find was for technical problems on the website. Immediately, a canned response came back — they would fix/look into it, but that has been the extent of any response. My message:

It is absolutely inappropriate for you, Cardinal Dolan, to pander to the POTUS — laws exist to prevent clergy of any stripe supporting a politician. I am 10 years older than you are and have never — in all of my years — observed such obsequious behavior.

Laud Trump? To what end? The president cares not for any person except himself. Any action this narcissist takes is all about congratulating himself about what a wonderful job he has done over the years of his presidency, and no one has the intestinal fortitude to disagree.

Hamstringing the very government departments which oversee safety within manufacturing plants, so that the plants open up without regard to worker safety in their work spaces, leading to illness and death.

There is not a shred of evidence to support your glad handing; I would think that your eminence has sufficient wisdom and knowledge to not allow yourself to be sucked into agreeing with or praising Trump in any way or for anything.

Your actions surely do not reflect a Christian Catholic belief in the sacredness of life. For shame!

JUDITH K. SCHWARTZ

Hamburg, New York

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Your article "When church leaders sound like presidential apologists" is deeply disturbing.

I recall once the diocese asked for parishioners to sign a petition against some supposedly egregious action taken by the government. The "request" was made during the usual Sunday announcements. At the end of Mass, I overheard two elderly women speaking: "Did you sign the petition?" "No, what is it about?" "I don't know, but the priest said we should sign it."

Many, many of my colleagues and I have tried very hard to veer away from taking pointed political stands for or against any politician or policy. There a several reasons for this: we are tax exempt and not supposed to; official church teaching on the important social issues of the day is inconsistent, with of course the exception of one issue; people do not attend Mass to be treated to their clergy's political "gripe of the day;" our job is to stand as a countercultural presence to society, not a reflection of it; and perhaps most important, Catholics listen to us and are influenced far more than perhaps they should be. Therefore, we have the greatest possible obligation to

respect their intelligence and stop treating them like idiots who cannot think.

I believe the current White House incumbent should step down from his office for being more the problem than the solution. However, if NCR has accurately reported the comments and bias the archbishop has shown in favor of him or anyone else for that matter, it is for the reasons I listed above that he should step down from his office along with "that great gentleman" whom Catholics need "more than ever." How much more credibility can we afford to lose?

(Fr.) EDWARD G. LAMBRO

Paterson, New Jersey

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The U.S. church surreptitiously became the Republican Party at prayer a long time ago. Ironically, it was to fund the expansion of good works: hospitals, schools and the like. GOP means money — it's like the force of gravity!

The papacy's and American hierarchy's misguided attempt to draw the abortion line in the sand is more troubling. Even if they "win" that one — thanks to their flattery of President Donald Trump — what will be their next winner-take-all moral battle? And the one after that?

The hierarchy are reducing themselves to whack-a-mole players, saying "no" and "no" and "no" as each new ethical public issue arises. Who does this actually help in navigating the complexities of real life?

And to all the people who hate NCR but can't resist reading it, I oppose abortion, but New York Cardinal Timothy couldn't care less. The "lost sheep," after all, are less congratulating than those the hierarchy prostitute themselves for to gain access to the illusory power and influence of the public square.

STEPHEN CONNOR

Cobourg, Ontario

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Regarding "When church leaders sound like presidential apologists," I am appalled by the slippery use of words demonstrated by New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan in his remarks quoted in this article.

I note that his statements are vague generalities which are offered with no attempt to connect them to examples from the president's behavior. For example, the president is said to be "a great gentleman." By what definition of "gentleman"?

"Hey, Google, what's the definition of 'gentleman?' " I asked.

Google replied: "a chivalrous, courteous or honorable man."

I'm scratching my head, wracking my memory for examples. All I come up with are rude tweets, denials of responsibility ("I was being sarcastic"), name calling, and self-promotion.

"[President Donald] Trump seems particularly sensitive to the, what shall I say, to the feelings of the religious community," Dolan is quoted as saying. How about: Trump seems particularly sensitive to his need for Catholic voters, if he is to be re-elected?

Trump may proclaim himself "the best (president) in the history of the Catholic Church," but Scripture says, "By their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:20).

Let adult Catholics discern for themselves whether Trump demonstrates the actions which would earn him the self-bestowed accolade of "best."

Whether used by a president to win votes or by a cardinal to kiss up to power, words can be used to deceive or curry favor.

Voters, beware! Look for fruit to test the words.

PAMELA KEMP

Kelowna, British Columbia

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What part of abuse is bad do Catholics for Trump not understand? Mick Mulvaney is infamous for informing the American people that bribery, extortion and general abuse of power happens in politics "all the time," and that we should just "get over it." I cannot help but think of clergy abuse apologists who told us that abusive priests are sinners, and we should just forgive them.

Abuse is bad. Period. And the more power the abuser has, the more dangerous his actions become. Bishops should speak up loudly against abuse. And for heaven sakes, bishops should never support a president who has been impeached for abuse of power.

CARMEN HARTONO

Oakland, California

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I think the article makes the main point strikingly clear. We should be able, without any effort, to distinguish between the words of a cardinal and a politician. A prince of the church should not be out there schlepping for votes for any politician or political party. There is absolutely no rationale that justifies this.

HENRY SIMMS

Rialto, California

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