News
Opinion



by NCR Staff

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Two weeks ago, NCR published a report by Soli Salgado on David Haas, the Catholic composer who has been accused of sexual misconduct. The following week, NCR columnist Jamie Manson responded to the allegations, writing that "Part of the doubt cast on Haas' victims is rooted in our theological tradition that trains us to not believe women." Following are letters to the editor that have been edited for length and clarity.

Thank you for publishing Soli Salgado's important and informative article about David Haas.

While victims of Haas may not wish to have charges pressed against him, I am disappointed to learn that so far none are at least considering civil action against him. The justice system could offer a measure of empowerment to those he has disempowered and, by filing civil suit, victims may influence event organizers to stop inviting him and, thus, protect women he would otherwise prey upon.



Language is also important. Although the term "sexual misconduct" is frequently used to describe sexual assault of adults, this crime is nonetheless a form of sexual abuse and should rightly be called this. Sexual misconduct sounds like mere naughtiness but it's much, much more. Just because a person has reached their 18th birthday, this does not protect them from being deeply harmed by sexual assault, whether that be kissing, fondling or outright rape. Abuse is abuse!

ROSEMARY ANDERSON

Vancouver, British Columbia

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I believe in being innocent until proven guilty but it sounds like the sheer number of cases lean towards David Haas as being a sexual deviant.

My heart goes out to the young women who claim to have been molested, assaulted, and the victim of lewd comments and behavior at the hand of Haas. I, too, enjoyed

his music until I saw this article.

JULIE HAUGEN

Oakdale, Minnesota

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I just read your article about the abuse perpetrated by David Hass, liturgical hymn and worship song writer and performer. I attended a retreat that was led by Jean Vanier who I have admired and now realize that he was not only a part of, but took part of abuse and evidently believed that he was entitled due to who he was.

The Roman Catholic Church is now an institution that we see as corrupt and abusive. These men and others are able to take advantage of the male patriarchy model that they have created, supported and followed. This is their disordered sense of entitlement that we as Catholics have consented to, allowed take place and have in our naiveté approved through silence.

This type of activity and the attitude that allows it, will change or the institutional church will fall on its own sword. Perhaps the sword of Constantine.

CHARLES PETER DESROCHES

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

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I do not agree that the church "trains us" to not believe women. Many saints are women who were examined and evidence was found to deem unusual statements to be credible. Women also influenced clergy in profound ways precisely because they were believed. This gives credence to the belief in complementarity. It goes on today.

Jamie Manson should have a more balanced view of what the church actually trains Catholics in. Women are not believed and they are believed. It's not all black and white.

It is true that there is an evil spirit of idolatry that exists in the church and which leads to further disintegration. If all follow the Ten Commandments, we don't have to

go far to understand that putting men or women on pedestals is our very first mistake.

MARGARET BANACH

Newington, Connecticut

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While reading "We need to talk about David Haas," I got the distinct impression that Jamie Manson regards the presumption of innocence, the prosecution's burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt, the right to confront one's accusers, the right to summon witnesses in one's defense, the right to respond to accusations, the right to equal treatment, the right to trial by jury and the right to due process of law as mere legal formalities.

As a black man, I believe that the presumption of innocence, etc. are sacred democratic rights, rooted in the highest principles of the Enlightenment. My people have a long, tragic history of being denied those rights, rights that Manson implicitly dismisses.

David Haas is a white man, but if the rights I included are reduced to a legal technicality as Manson would like, black males will suffer the most. The targeting of black men under Title IX is a case in point. And with the gleeful post-mortem lynching of Kobe Bryant by Evan Rachel Wood, Abigail
Disney, America magazine and others, black men were reminded that even death will not save us from being judged guilty without just due process.

Manson's quiet depreciation of the presumption of innocence and other associated rights would make that the norm, regardless of her intentions.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

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