Opinion



by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

October 9, 2020
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Here's a sampling of letters to the editor from our readers in response to articles and columns that appeared on NCRonline in September 2020. To join the conversation, follow the guidelines at the end of this post.

Thanks for providing this list of "Four Catholic-led groups working to reelect President Donald Trump." I joined and donated to all four. Couldn't have found them all without you. God bless you abundantly!

JAMES MARTELLO

Metairie, Louisiana

***

If I'm not mistaken certain people on the right have rebuked National Catholic Reporter for using the name "Catholic" in its title as if the word were copyrighted. It is rather ironic that those same people now us the word "Catholic" in their titles which only serves to underscore their hypocrisy.

Each of the four groups, although in their inception might have actually worked toward genuine pro-life policies, it appears have morphed into nothing more than beneficiaries of the largess of individuals who want a Republican majority to carry out the big business/small government agenda. Any progress toward a pro-file agenda would be strictly collateral and largely unintended.

These organizations seem intent upon dividing the Catholic population into two camps: pro-Republican and pro-Democratic. The latter, of course, with the help of certain prelates who may personally benefit, will be labelled as not faithful Catholics so they will either vote for Trump out of fear, hardly an exercise in prudential judgement, or they will not vote at all which is tantamount to the same thing.

The Catholic Church has been receiving far more deference than the Catholic population would expect being only about 25% of the entire population. The difference is the political involvement of certain prelates who have no reticence about engaging in politics in spite of their tax-exempt status. It appears that if those prelates join with the Republicans they are insulated from accountability. That may be true regarding the Internal Revenue Service, but their accountability will be certain when their own flocks become disenchanted with their posture and determine that being an "unfaithful" Catholic works well for themselves and their own consciences.

CHARLES A LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana



***

I just read the four Catholic organizations that are promoting the reelection of President Donald Trump.

I am a lifelong Catholic, studied for the priesthood, served 33 years in the U.S. military and Trump is anti-life.

He has lied to the citizens of the dangers of COVID-19. He has no empathy or concern for our most vulnerable citizens. He does not follow the Gospels when Jesus said, "the least you do for my brethren, you do for me."

California and the western part of the U.S. are suffering in wildfires, what has he done for those suffering or offered a prayer of sympathy? He does not represent my views or my beliefs in Catholic social justice.

RON PAQUETTE

Biddeford, Maine

***

It amazes me that four Catholic organizations would support President Donald Trump who got his personally chosen Attorney General William Barr to decide to use taxpayer money to defend Trump in a rape case that happened before he was even president. Unconscionable!

ED CURTIN

Portland, Oregon

****

Your headline is misleading. You should have included the word unofficial somewhere in your headline so as to make sure it doesn't appear to represent the official endorsement of the Roman Catholic Church, but is clear this is a group of Catholic people doing their own advocacy with no official endorsement of the church.

You may have a better way to take care of my concern with a deferent approach in the headline, so use it!

LOU DeMARS

Edina, Minnesota

That National Prayer Breakfast story "Trump courts Catholic voters at conservative-run National Catholic Prayer Breakfast" ought to be renamed "The National Catholic Republican Prayer Breakfast." They could add a caveat: "No Democrat need apply."

(Fr.) TOM ZELINSKI

Washington, Michigan

***

Why does the Catholic Church always seem to curry the favor of the rich, powerful and right-wing when Jesus sought out the poor, the powerless, the abandoned and forgotten?

PHIL JOHNSON

Romeoville, Illinois

***

To the board of directors and organizers of the 2020 National Catholic Prayer Breakfast:

I am appalled and disgusted that you presented to Attorney General William Barr the Christifideles Laici Award for "exemplary Christlike" behavior. You should all be utterly ashamed.

When I was growing up Catholic, and learning about Christ's teachings, I was taught about the gravity of mortal sin. And from my perspective, Barr has performed, and commanded others to perform, numerous actions which most certainly qualify as mortal sins. You have completely ignored and turned your backs on Jesus Christ's fundamental message and teachings. To reward Barr for all his heinous commissions and omissions is reprehensible. He is aiding and abetting the Trump administration in its efforts to destroy our democracy and replace it with a fascist dictatorship. Have you all sold your souls to the devil?

I strongly urge you to withdraw the award, retract the praise you bestowed upon Barr, and publicly apologize for making such a grievous mistake.

ANN KRONENBERGER

Wilmington, Delaware

***

It is distressing to see that even an award, which at its core is designed to recognize good works of people dedicated to the service of the church and its people is a source of division. This is another example of how low, as people of faith, we have fallen from grace.

If the mission of the church was to divide its people, ignore the Gospel, acquiesce to the wishes of a hedonistic, egotistical liar with a strong desire to destroy our democracy, then the leadership of the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast has made a right choice. Actions of Attorney General William Barr are not those of a man with a "thinking Catholic brain, a character of substance, and a moral spine."

It doesn't require much intestinal fortitude or Catholic thinking to nod your head in agreement and blindly follow every flawed idea of the bully in charge. That is called mindless servitude and should not be rewarded by a well-respected religious institution. The lack of checks and balances is appalling. Give enough money and you can slap "Catholic" on any corrupt idea that comes along.

The Gospel should be our guiding principle and everything we do as Catholics needs to be consistent with the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Anything less needs to be decisively rejected.

ZLATKO GRBAVAC

Niles, Illinois

***

The National Catholic Prayer Breakfast was a disgrace and all who took part in it disgraceful.

The honoree is the very one who just reinstated the death penalty, fabricates interpretations of the law to protect President Donald Trump, uses tear gas on innocent protesters so that Trump can make a mockery of the Bible in front of the church and employs the Department of Justice to defend the latest sex allegations against the president.

Perhaps some of our bishops have never personally experienced the largesse of our God, have never understood why Jesus sat with a despised Samaritan, touched lepers and traveled into foreign territories. They refuse to equate these gospel prototypes with today's outcasts, migrants, blacks and non-Christians.

Perhaps they [the bishops] never really believed in "be not afraid" and operate only out of blindness and fear — fear that true gospel values could become the norm and

their hold on power might be taken away.

Let us all reread Chapter 4 of Luke's Gospel echoing Isaiah's plea of "giving sight to the blind, release of prisoners, money to the poor and liberty to the oppressed."

Whether they were keynote speakers, giving the invocations or behind the scenes, they are each complicit in this travesty. Calling this breakfast "Catholic" is an insult to all who are truly Catholic.

MARY HARRISON

La Canada, California

Advertisement

How disappointing to see some Trump-loving bishops and clergy blurting out their anti-Biden baloney in "The complicated reality of Catholic bishops on Twitter." As much as I despise President Donald Trump and his disastrous administration I know that, as a pastor, I cannot abuse my role as a pastoral leader by telling my sisters and brothers how to vote.

Why don't they get that? Why publicly attack another person's faith? They should be ashamed of themselves. Their unfortunate actions further undermine their authority and give us more reason to ignore them.

(Fr.) EDWIN DUYSHART

Los Angeles, California

***

I do agree that as individuals, bishops have the right to voice their opinion, but then the opinion of Joseph Strickland, not Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas. Same would go for Fr. James Altman — he is free to voice his opinion as James Altman.

Whenever these individuals want to add their title to their opinion, then they are giving a message not as a citizen, but as an authority figure of the Catholic Church.

In addition to canon law, there is another law that should be explored. All of these organizations are 501 C (3) of the IRS Code. They are tax exempt as a charitable organization. IRS law is quite clear that they cannot lobby for legislation nor can they endorse any candidate.

What may need to happen is that their tax-exempt status needs challenged because of what they are saying since they are making these statements as authority figures of the Catholic Church. Particularly Altman — his YouTube video says specifically that you cannot be Catholic and vote for a Democrat. He even goes further to say that no "faithful" Catholic voted for President Barack Obama when in reality, President Obama did win the Catholic popular vote.

These individuals do have the right to voice their opinion, but that opinion must be voiced as a citizen, not as an authority figure in the Catholic Church.

JAMES OFFENBERGER

Vienna, West Virginia

***

Franciscan Fr. Daniel Horan's article clearly cited the answer to how U.S. Catholics "should vote" according to the Catholic Church speaking for Jesus: "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States." If the clergy would teach us with this excellent source of collective wisdom of our American bishops, they would see that each Catholic must decide for himself/herself which candidate best follows Jesus' teaching.

Prayerful and honest reflection on the guidance is necessary, but the answer will come through the Spirit. Political tweets by clergy only further mislead the faithful into thinking that an answer resides in tweets. For the clergy to join the divisive battles of civil politics only exacerbates the challenges of faithful voting by the laity. Don't tell us who to vote for. Teach us how to vote as Jesus would with a Spirit-guided conscience.

RICHARD MILLER

Woodstock, Maryland

You report in "Up-close account of Pell's historic trial raises an uncomfortable question" that Melissa Davey sharply rebutted me for what I said about the Cardinal George Pell trial. Davey wrongly asserted that I did not have access to the trial transcript when I wrote my one article when the suppression order was lifted in February 2019. She fancifully claims inside knowledge from lawyers who heard the complainant give his evidence.

Recently at a launch of her book when asked, "What did you come to think in the end of Pell's accuser?" she said, "It didn't matter who I spoke to, who was there. Because obviously I had conversations with the legal teams in the hallways of the court between different hearings and things like that. They all described him [the complainant] as eloquent, articulate, honest."

It would be a breach of the law for any lawyer who was present for the testimony of the complainant to background a journalist on the performance of the complainant. There is no way any lawyer for the defense would have said any such thing. It would be completely unethical as well as illegal for any lawyer for the prosecution to do so. I am so confident of the ethics of the lawyers involved in the case on both sides as to assert that none of them told Davey that the complainant was eloquent, articulate and honest.

Davey quotes from my Feb. 26, 2019, article in which I spoke about "the complainant being confused about all manner of things." In that article, I told the reader, "I heard some of the publicly available evidence and have read most of the transcript."

In her sharp rebuke of me, Davey wrote that she "found it incredible that commentary such as this was being published and broadcast long before transcripts could have been accessed at the court." She was correct when she stated, "It would take days … to thoroughly review transcripts for a case that ran for five weeks." Pell's trial had concluded on Dec. 11, 2018. I had access to the transcript for more than two months before writing my article. Davey could not access the transcript for some time after that. But that was her problem, not mine. I had many weeks to thoroughly review the transcripts.

Readers interested in my analysis of the incoherence of the prosecution case and the shortcomings of the police investigation can see my piece published after the High Court appeal. In her book, Davey addresses none of these deficiencies in the

prosecution case and police investigation.

(Fr.) FRANK BRENNAN, SJ

Parkville, Australia

***

If my memory serves me right, while living/working at Vatican City, Cardinal George Pell claimed for health reasons he was unable to return to Australia causing Australian legal authorities to conduct long-distance video interviews. A delegation of Australian legal authorities later traveled to Vatican City to accommodate the cardinal. Eventually he was compelled to return to Australia to stand trial where he was convicted and imprisoned.

Pell is able to return to Vatican City after his conviction was overturned and special travel restrictions permission (COVID-19 related) attained to leave Australia. Somewhere along the line, Pell was miraculously healed from his medical condition(s) he claimed years before precluded his return to Australia; now allowing him to fly non-stop to Vatican City! Will miracles never cease; or is Pell not believable?

I'll be curious to learn what brings Pell back to Vatican City where, as a 79-year-old, he holds no position and is soon to be retired from the College of Cardinals. Did he require Pope Francis' permission to return? Has Pell repented of his ways and is making amends by offering to undo the damage he has done or does he retain the same mindset thinking he can finish what he began thereby triumphing over his adversaries?

MICHAEL J. McDERMOTT

Tyler, TEXAS

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.