Opinion



by NCR Staff

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In her recent column, Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister talks about how her mother told her that something can be learned in everything. And Chittister learned a lot of lessons from someone she didn't expect — President Donald Trump. Following are letters to the editor responding to the column. The letters have been edited for length and clarity. To join the conversation, follow the guidelines below.

Since I also learned a lesson from President Donald Trump that goes far beyond any thought that I could have had four years ago, the title of Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister's article caught my interest. As I read, I could relate and admire the ability to write it all many lessons succinctly, but I finished greatly disappointed, if not angry.

Here is a woman religious, known for spiritual guidance and nothing, nothing, for hope in the presence and love of God. Nothing about learning to love. Nothing about learning from opposites. Nothing even resembling "for those who love God, everything works out for good."

You see the lesson I learned was the insistence that every person is a child of God, loved by God, his creation. Everyone, even the one I would rather not love, the one I might find repulsive, and represents to me a picture of evil. Everyone.

How is hope to be found, light to be brought to the world if I do not begin to learn God's own love? To find common ground?

I have learned that the book of Revelation was written more as an encouragement to a suffering, persecuted people, rather than a prophecy of things to come. So what kind of prophet will I choose to be — one of hope and trust in God's presence always? Or a prophet of doom and despair?

Trump challenged me to love. The article gave in to the loss of trust and hope.

MARY PAUKOVITZ

New Lenox, Illinois



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In the article, "Thanks, President Trump — I learned a lot from you," the author's points are well taken.

It's important to add that President Donald Trump and Congress don't operate in a vacuum. Many decades ago, Pope John Paul II ordered colleges and universities to become more Catholic. Clergy and religious engaged in public service were ordered to return to their ministries. Seminaries were reformed to be more traditional.

What has come out of this? Six Supreme Court justices are Catholic, five are right-wing conservatives. Attorney General William Barr too is Catholic, pushing so-called traditional values as he reinstates the federal death penalty, acts against Department of Justice tradition as Trump's personal lawyer, and makes an off the rails speech at the University of Notre Dame.

The list goes on of Catholics in politics and business who support irreligious Trump whose personal character, business ethics, and moral compass have long been questioned. Many of the people supporting and enabling Trump are Catholics!

Yes, Trump is dangerous. Yes, there are other Trumps out there. The work of moderates and progressives is to identify who their opponent is, take their gloves off and join the street fight already happening.

This is the world John Paul played a major part in shaping. It speaks volumes that the real church is not the one marketed to the masses. Reformer Pope Francis is revealing the false piety that shields Holy Mother church from being exposed allowing it to infect the world. We reap what we sow.

MICHAEL J. McDERMOTT

Tyler, Texas

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I moved to Nicaragua from the U.S. 35 years ago. Why? I could no longer bear that our "American way of life" was only sustainable by the constant, ongoing, ransacking of the non-white world. Nothing's changed: Hurricanes Eta and Iota are the more powerful because of our flagrant abuse of common global resources, "necessary" to

support that unjust standard of living.

And they're just the beginning. Nicaraguans face temperature rises of three to six degrees Celsius, though they contribute virtually nothing to global warming themselves.

Forgive me, Sister Joan, but there's no "learning" involved. Trump is little more than all our selfishness, writ large. For some, he's even a relief — a green light to be openly misogynistic, racist and deceitful. In essence, isn't that merely consumerism itself, again writ large?

None of this should surprise anyone. How can a society rooted in genocide, slavery, abuse of women, racism, extortion, the laying waste of "Third Worlds," indeed of creation itself, ever be anything else? If and while people of the U.S. continue living way beyond the just carrying capacity of Earth, Trump is our true prophet, revealing ourselves to ourselves. He is exceptional. Tragically, he's far from the exception.

PAUL PEULEVÉ BAKER

Managua, Nicaragua

Advertisement

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Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister, God love her, has again exposed President Donald Trump's failure in office. How much better off we will be when he's deposed.

TIMOTHY J. CONNAIR

Dayton, Ohio

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Much is made internally about the division within the United States and the degree to which it contributes to unrest and conflict. As an outsider, I see it a bit differently. To my mind, a nation is analogous to a personality writ large.

Donald Trump, surprisingly, won the 2016 presidency, and his subsequent reign seems to have confirmed that divisiveness is too kind a word. It presumes that each side enjoys a legitimate presumption of right order and that the other side is disordered.

Too many elements of America's personality seem at war with each other such that one has to wonder whether Trump is but the eruption of a more generalized infection, a personality disorder of self-harm that needs urgent treatment.

It should be surprising that faith systems, religion, would contribute to the infection, to the disorder where they should be healers. Our own presumptuous, ontologically other Roman Catholic Church leadership and structure lead us to wonder where is the mature adult, the Holy Spirit, and the incarnate Christ.

DENNIS MacDONALD

Bedford, Nova Scotia

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