Opinion



by NCR Staff

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In a recent column titled "American Viganò: Archbishop Chaput divides episcopacy even in retirement," NCR political columnist Michael Sean Winters discusses an article by Archbishop Charles Chaput talking about whether President-elect Joe Biden should receive Communion. Following are letters to the editor responding to Winters' column. They have been edited for length and clarity. To join the conversation, follow the guidelines at the end of this post.

As I read the piece by Michael Sean Winters, I couldn't help but remember something one of my undergraduate professors (a priest and former Benedictine abbot) said: "In my many years of working with people, I've come to believe that I would always rather err on the side of being pastoral rather than being right."

Another thing came to my mind — the slogan that was popular a number of years ago — WWJD? or What Would Jesus Do? Jesus, the man who was about the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law.

(Sr.) CLARICE KORGER, OSB

Yankton, South Dakota



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It wasn't until I studied for my theology comps in graduate school that I sat with Catholic social teachings and read *Pacem in Terris* and *Rerum Novarum*. I reread the papers coming out of Vatican II. And I look at the huge space now between that magnificence and the U.S. bishops' conference. I'm nauseated.

When did pro-life lose its focus so much that it became only about abortion? Where are Catholics screaming about poverty and racism and the death penalty? If you're pro-life, your focus is on the quality of life.

A friend once said that she was baptized Catholic and not Republican. I think New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan and his playmates ought to remember what Jesus said to his disciples about currying favor with power — it's not their job. The role of the

church is to serve as critique of society, not to nurse at its breast. Its power source isn't 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

The job of the president is to see that the law is enforced. He cannot by himself overturn a law. So refusing communion from someone who doesn't like a law but loves the laws that structure our government and is otherwise a man of morals and faith is vicious? It also ignores the spirit of *Pacem in Terris* and much of social teaching.

KAREN SILVER

New Rochelle, New York

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If we are to consider "worthiness" as a prerequisite for receiving Our Lord in Holy Communion then I do not think many would be approaching the altar — even Archbishop Charles Chaput! We all pray "Lord I am not worthy" before receiving.

There is one judge of our hearts and souls and that is not Charles Chaput. I believe Pope Francis needs to call some of our slower bishops to Rome for a private tutorial.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina

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The real problem with purity in modern Christian thought goes right back to the beginning in the first century. That darn Jesus was way too liberal! If he hadn't made the mistake of talking to and even eating with tax collectors, prostitutes and other sinners the church could have been pure.

Several times the apostles tried to tell him to behave, but he just wouldn't listen and kept accepting sinners. His correct action when they brought that woman adulteress to him would have been to hand out stones to the front row of her accusers. Instead of those wishy-washy disciples, he really needed strong men like Archbishop Charles Chaput, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò and other clear thinkers who would tell him to purify the church. They would have handed out the stones!

GENE SWAIN

Calgary, Alberta

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Archbishop Charles Chaput is demonstrating once again he is mostly and merely a right-wing ideologue Republican disguised in ecclesiological episcopal clothing!

PAUL ROSSI

San Mateo, California

Advertisement

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Three cheers for Michael Sean Winters parsing of Archbishop Charles Chaput's argument for denying President-elect Joe Biden the grace of the Eucharist. Where is the scandal given by a person in public life who has struggled with his conscience and has decided that supporting existing protection of a woman's right to choose is not the moral equivalent of supporting "abortion on demand?"

Alas, there is much greater scandal in a hierarchy that has given unequivocal support to an administration that pillaged the earth, dealt in lies and misinformation, denigrated women, supported racism, caged children, built walls against immigrants, rushed to execute federal prisoners, suborned perjury, pardoned felons, and so much more.

And the sole reason for this support? A splash of anti-abortion posturing that has so far, quite frankly, done no darn good. To paraphrase an old proverb: "If every bishop swept in front of his own door, the whole church might be clean."

CULLEN SCHIPPE

Albuquerque, New Mexico

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The U.S. bishops' conference always protests that they do not play politics yet they show by the rhetoric of some of their members that they do indeed favor the Republican Party. Their rhetoric against President Barack Obama as well as their posturing about President-elect Joe Biden when added to their obsequious fealty to President Donald Trump is a defining case in point.

Given the opportunities to correct Republican politicians who are self-identified Catholics who "follow the law" when that law violates church teachings and failing to say anything such as proposing the denial of communion to those individuals also underscores their political bias.

The bishops need to cease dividing the Catholic population along political lines. This might have proven useful to elect certain individuals favored by those who can influence the bishops but it does nothing to facilitate the bishops' ability to influence the people in the pews.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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In the article, the author should add Cardinals Giovanni Becciu and Raymond Burke. Burke for his scandalous political handling of the Knights of Malta and Becciu for what at this time can charitably be called financial malfeasance. If these men haven't caused scandal in the church who has?

Within the church, President-elect Joe Biden is small potatoes. Pro-birth in not pro-life. Pro-choice is not pro-abortion. Biden publicly states for decades he's personally opposed to abortion. Nothing more should be required of a public office holder required to consider all citizens in a pluralistic society. Otherwise, no Catholic could hold a public office and/or public service.

Archbishop Charles Chaput and other clerics/prelates play loose with words and terms suiting their needs. They've taught us the truth doesn't matter. That's the greatest scandal to the laity.

MICHAEL J. McDERMOTT

Tyler, Texas

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I disagree 100% with the writer of this article. All the premises made against the archbishop ignore the fact that Archbishop Charles Chaput stands behind the greatest commandment, which the Democratic party wants no part of.

The laws and commandments set forth by God are more important than "love your neighbor as yourself." That's why it's the greatest commandment.

DUANE KLEM

Clarkston, Michigan

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Your article criticizing Archbishop Charles Chaput would be laughable, if it wasn't such a serious topic.

Your publication among others continually dilute or totally ignore the Catechism of the Catholic Church to the detriment of her followers.

Giving Communion to a person who publicly identifies as a "devout Catholic" and proceeds to deny church teaching is an egregious sin. Any clergyman, be he priest, bishop, archbishop, cardinal or pope, cooperates in that sin when he knowingly gives Communion to anyone who defies that teaching in such a public manner.

It's too bad that the U.S. bishops' conference hasn't adopted a policy that would support the teaching of the church by consistently denying Communion to those who insist on public defiance/denial of the catechism, which teaches us that receiving Jesus in Communion is uniting us to him. How can one be united to Christ while supporting, or worse promoting, immoral policies of the government?

Count me among Chaput's "people" in support of worthy reception of the sacrament. I am proud to stand with him and with him!

DONNA JORGENSON FARRELL

Broomfield, Colorado

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