Opinion



by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

February 12, 2021

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

In two recent opinion pieces, executive editor Heidi Schlumpf and political columnist Michael Sean Winters discussed liberal Catholicism. In her column, Schlumpf talks about how the inauguration of President Joe Biden has brought about conversation of the rise of liberal Catholicism or liberal Christianity. "While I'm sure progressives are grateful for the attention, I also want to say: Folks, we've been here all along," she writes. Winters writes that "we liberal Catholics never went away and never could go away." Letters to the editor responding to the pieces are below and have been edited for length and clarity.



Thank you, Heidi Schlumpf! We have been here all along.

Raised in a conservative Pius XII church, we were overjoyed and spiritually liberated in a John XXIII church, learned from Catholic university education, grew in the Christian Family Movement, Cursillo Movement, Marriage Encounter, post-graduate studies at mid-life at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University, and with spiritual direction, served as jail and prison ministers, raised a family, served our local parishes as lectors, lay ministers, lay presiders, and donors, and are longtime NCR readers.

At 81, we have an expansive view of "church" and know that we have (in the words of Edwina Gately) a "Big, God!"

MIKE and JOANN McCABE

Eugene, Oregon

***

Well done, Michael Sean Winters, for writing a constructive piece claiming the position laid out by the Catholic left. This is the third in a string of constructive letters written by Winters recently, including a piece on abortion and another on Massimo Faggioli's *Joe Biden and Catholicism in the United States*.

While staying true to his classical liberal view within the Catholic Church, he lays out a realistic challenge to both conservative and liberal Catholics. I believe both the

liberal and conservative wings of the church should avoid claiming they have the definitive say, and that the other side is either ignorant or corrupted. Winters is correct to point out that liberals and conservatives must challenge each other because the church is developing like the mystical body it truly is. Only dead things do not develop.

This Catholic body must look for remedies to heal the infectious divisiveness, which can devolve into uncharity. A good starting point for such healing begins with everyday conversations seen through the lens of the Holy Spirit (i.e. love), and trying to see from the perspective of the other. Conversations that begin this way tend to go well. Pope Francis points out that we worship a God of surprises, but it is hard to let God surprise us if we remain stuck in our circular thought chambers.

I like to read NCR among others to get a credible view from the Catholic left, as I read the National Catholic Register, etc. to get a view from the right. I am grateful for thoughtful opinions of both liberal and conservative thinkers because I am surrounded by both: in my family, parish and social life, and I want to stay connected with them all. At this point in the conversation, I prefer to "gather" with Jesus, and resist the "scatter" of the devil.

DAVE HICKIN

Brecksville, Ohio

***

Yes, we have been here all along, as Catholics. We were excited by Vatican II and the hope that the church would totally give fresh air to the old guard of pray, pay, and obey.

And then the church listed far to the right with the Evangelicals, Donald Trump, and far right Catholicism. We were hoping that the church scandals and gender issues and politics would somehow become real talks with Catholic women and the laity, not doubling down on male priests not interested in discussing with sincere groups of lay women, sisters and men but trying to find common ground on real issues.

We will not give up our faith of Christian values and their loving application to our lives today.

JANE HUTTON

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Advertisement

***

The article by Michael Sean Winters roused my ire. I felt as if the quoted respondents were skirting the heart of the matter while presenting a trinity of proclamations.

There is no "how to" when the issue, clearly stated, is one's need for God. Interestingly, it was expressed specifically as a need for Jesus. That made me wonder even more. If our human need is to be in relationship with God, and God rephrases the relationship with the inclusivity of loving others, then pausing, listening, and praying become catalysts for transformation — universal as well as individual. To empower transformation, one must stay — be here all along.

One must express dismay and disagreement if staying means conforming without communication. If necessary, one must fight, not to win but to be heard.

Divisive tribalism, even when church people comprise the tribe, always oppresses.

Scripture tells us that Jesus turned the other cheek and forgave because his tormentors did not know what they were doing to him. Jesus also turned over the tables of those who knew full well what they were doing to the community. Pray … speak, and act!

FRAN SALONE-PELLETIER

Shallotte, North Carolina

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.