Opinion



by NCR Staff

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In a recent editorial, "Bishops' opposition to vaccine, COVID-19 relief reveals a near-obsession with abortion," we write that it is frustrating to see the U.S. bishops sowing doubt about vaccines and relief that promote the common good. Following are letters to the editor responding to our editorial. They have been edited for length and clarity.

I am so over these U.S. bishops. We Catholics are intelligent, thinking, moral individuals. Stop infantilizing us.

We have heard ad nauseum the dictates of these men on abortion. Please print articles about life outside of the womb. These men can't seem to get enough of sex and women's reproductive rights or non-rights. I have never seen anything in the gospels or scripture that indicates Jesus' obsession with this.

Those of us who still attend church and keep up with our faith are inundated with this obsession in parishes. Please don't give oxygen to these one-issue bishops in your great journalism.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina



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Okay, so "preeminent" doesn't mean "only" or "determinative," but why be so negative? Tell us avid readers what you think the word does mean, really?

Webster's says it means "having paramount rank." Webster's also defines "paramount" as "superior to all others." Sure sounds a lot like "only" don't you think?

JOHN A. DONNELLY

Middletown, Delaware

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The bishop's statement against the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is ridiculous for two reasons.

First, the vaccine is necessary in order for humanity to be rid of this disease and the church should be a leader of its flock in ensuring that everyone gets a vaccine.

Second, saying the vaccine is tainted because it was developed using fetuses from unborn children who were aborted is the same logic that would prevent an organ transplant recipient because the donor died in as a soldier in a war, or as a convicted criminal who died as a result of capital punishment or one who was purposely killed by another human being.

The reason for the end of life of the donor has no relationship to the organ being donated or to the recipient; accordingly, no moral attribute can be applied to the organ or the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

We American Catholics deserve better from our bishops who are charged with being shepherds of his flock.

PAUL L. JONES

Miami, Florida

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I write today specifically to call attention to the editorial referencing some bishop members of U.S. bishops' conference and their apparent obsession with abortion as the ultimate litmus test to all things pertaining to President Joe Biden and his agenda for all.

I don't recall as much opposition to an elected president, who happens to be a "practicing" Catholic in a long time. I was particularly struck by the last paragraph of the editorial which I paraphrase in calling these bishops "pro-birth' not "pro-life."

If we spent as much time and energy in caring for children after birth as we do opposing "abortion" in this church and country, maybe we would have time and energy to become truly "pro-life" when it comes to other quality of life issues, such as mass incarceration, death penalty, immigration reform and our foreign policy in

general when it comes to support of U.S. government support of coups against legitimate regimes we do not agree with.

JOHN P. MACFADYE

Boynton Beach, Florida

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When they object to a vaccine based on fetal cells from the 1970s, those original cells no longer existing since the 1970s, it is an obsession. But that describes their psychology.

From a moral perspective, it is idolatry. They are placing abortion above all other moral issues, especially those that relate to actual lives such as food, shelter and health care talked about in scripture. They are placing it above God: idolatry.

PAULINE BAILEY

Stamford, Connecticut

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Many congratulations on your wonderful editorial about the bishops' obsession with abortion. The statement on Inauguration Day was catastrophic for us here in Ireland who welcome the arrival of a new practicing Catholic president after the havoc of a scandalous, indeed manifestly sinful so-called pro-life incumbent.

Thankfully, Pope Francis spoke on behalf of Catholics and people of good will throughout the world. This was followed up by the comment on the $1.7 trillion relief plan for the country with the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in the world.

Again, the focus was on a tiny part about abortion rather than what the efficacy of the plan is in facing COVID-19, the central and vital, life-giving theme. Thus, the final remark of your editorial is so appropriate — if these bishops and those who agree with them are so concerned about life in the womb why don't they issue some statements on the care of life outside the womb.

Again, many thanks for articulating what I have wanted to be said for so long.

(Fr.) PADDY CULLY, C.S.Sp.

Dublin, Ireland

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I am shocked at this attitude. Abortion has absolutely nothing to do with this issue. Are all the lives already lost or the potential lost lives if this virus continues, of no value? It's my understanding that the after effects, especially for those who already have health problems, can be long lasting.

As a church, our past contains some really big problems, however, this is unbelievable!

(Sr.) DIANE MILLER, OSB

Watertown, South Dakota

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That something good can come from something bad in the distant past is like, well, a miracle. And we apparently don't know the reasons for that abortion way back when. We do know that now some life-saving good can come from it.

This should, I hope, give us some pause to consider how riven the church has been these last 48 years, two sides at each other. The devil, however we perceive or regard him, must be dancing in glee. One issue has torn the church apart.

The time is long overdue to stop the bickering, pray for each other, pray together, as one church, loving those we disagree with, and with good humility and humor, doing this even though they are wrong and we are right.

We are looking from different points of view, yes, but our church is called Catholic, comprehensive, universal, broad in sympathies, tastes, interests and perspectives. It's long time that we became true to our name. Jesus came because his people, the Jews, had become too literal and too narrow in their outlook. He wanted to widen their perspectives, help them to be more inclusive — and look what we have come

to. We have done it yet again. Lord help us. Yet again.

JIM LEIN

Minot, North Dakota

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I wonder about the various bishops taking the position that a vaccine is morally compromised. Are they completely oblivious to the irony? The U.S. bishops applauded a speech by a bishop involved in the child abuse scandal as revealed by the secular authorities in Pennsylvania. It welcomed Theodore McCarrick at the height of his power and predation. Its members took huge gifts of cash from the bishop of an impoverished diocese as he robbed his flock.

These are just a few of the more egregious acts of our American bishops. The other antichristian behavior many of them exhibit, the arrogance, greed, and so forth are on display for all to see and would fill pages.

This sowing of confusion about the vaccines will no doubt fuel opposition to the vaccines among those misguided enough to look to the bishops for leadership. The result: points scored in the culture wars. And more dead people. Probably no dead bishops — they will likely get their vaccine of choice and top-notch medical care if they get sick.

When it comes to being morally compromised, our bishops are experts and lead by example.

NICHOLAS PARMA

San Antonio, Texas

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My faith practice has continued for 80-plus years — until now when it's on hiatus or a deeper and longer break. I don't know yet. I've weathered all the sex abuse and pedophilia scandals, but now I feel the "church" is as much a political party as a church.

I'm strongly pro-life and a strong advocate for the seamless garment, and feel the current domestic hierarchy is neither. Being pro-life means more — a lot more — than being anti-abortion. They say anti-abortion is the preeminent issue, but it appears to be the only issue. Lots of steps got me to where I am, including, as you have noted in your editorial, the bishops' Inauguration Day statement. My God! A devout, rosary bead carrying, life-long practicing Catholic is inaugurated and that day is chosen by the president of the U.S. bishops' conference to say that his policies "would advance moral evils."

And now the relief bill that will lift half of children in poverty out of that poverty plus do so much more and what's the single evaluation criteria: it does not include provisions of the Hyde Amendment which prevents the expenditure of federal funds on abortion.

You want to reduce abortion? If finances are a barrier to having a child, other provisions of the relief bill will help, including the child tax credit, expansion of Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act that will provide medical care for pregnancies. A living wage and child care provisions will also help. Let's advocate for them!

KEVIN CRONIN

Laguna Woods, California

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