Opinion

News



Longtime host Alex Trebek stands behind his podium as the stage crew gets contestants ready to film a session of "Jeopardy!" on Dec. 13, 2011. (Flickr/Steve Jurvetson)



by Michael Sean Winters

View Author Profile

Follow on Twitter at @michaelswinters

Join the Conversation

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

May 10, 2021

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

When "Jeopardy!" airs at 7:30 p.m., I am usually still writing or just beginning to make dinner, so I have not seen any of the seven guest hosts the program has aired since the death of longtime host Alex Trebek. But social media is drowning with commentary about the different hosts and that got me to thinking: What if prominent Catholics guest hosted and had a part in the selection of the categories?

It is hard to imagine Pope Francis doing a guest hosting gig, but maybe if the proceeds went to charity he could be enticed. It is not difficult to imagine what categories he would choose: "Accompaniment," "Famous synods," "Argentine football," "St. Ignatius," "Peripheries" and "Insincere *dubia*" are the most obvious choices.

I thought of "Mercy," but of course, if a contestant said, "Pope Francis, I will take 'Mercy' for $100," the pontiff, as infallible teacher of the faith, would have to object: Mercy is gratuitous and cannot be taken at any price.

It is also easy to guess what the clue for Final Jeopardy would be. Remember, you get the answer and have to guess the question. The answer would be "Pat Marrin," and the winning question would be "Who is the pope's favorite cartoonist?"

Former Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput would have a very different list of categories if he were to guest host. I imagine his list would include: "Venial sins," "Mortal sins," "Heresies," "Politicians who should be denied Communion," "Actors who played Inspector Javert in 'Les Misérables' " and "Favorite right-wing talking points." The Final Jeopardy answer would be "Cardinal Blase Cupich," but I will leave it to your imagination what Chaput would want the question to be.

Advertisement

NCR's columnist Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister would have the kind of personality to pull off a guest gig at "Jeopardy!". Her categories might be: "Favorite Sufi stories," "God, gender and THE big lightbulb," "Dioceses that have banned me," "Things two dogs and a parrot might say," "Bending St. Benedict's Rule" and "Favorite NCR editors." The Final Jeopardy answer would be "John XXIII," and the correct question: "Popes Sister Joan liked."

Not every Catholic would be a good fit for "Jeopardy!". Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, for example, could easily come up with categories like "Prayer" and "Obedience" and "Poverty," but the producers would no doubt conclude his list was "too unsexy." Italian Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu has plenty of time on his hands since Pope Francis sacked him last year, but he would be a better fit for a different gameshow, "The Price is Right." Disgraced former nuncio Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò is also unlikely to host "Jeopardy!". It is easier to imagine the producers at the American History Channel's show "Codes and Conspiracies" inviting Viganò to host their new season. It would save on payroll in their research department.

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Jeopardy! (@jeopardy)

As every NCR reader knows, the Catholic Church is the people of God, so we should not limit our search for guest hosts to members of the clergy and religious life. Napa Institute founder and conservative Catholic mega-donor Tim Busch is a loquacious sort and would make a fine host of "Jeopardy!". I can imagine categories like "Hotels I own," "Cigar and cognac pairings," "Vineyards I own," "Hierarchs whose apartments I paid to renovate," "Universities I own" and "Agitprop." Ironically, those would be the same categories Donald Trump might devise, except for the one about paying to renovate the apartments of hierarchs.

Maybe I should throw my hat into the ring. But what would the categories be? "Woke ideas that will get Trump reelected" is obvious, but how would I limit the questions to only six? "Favorite pasta recipes" would be a natural, as would "Divas I adore" and "Favorite Gilbert and Sullivan operettas." A great category would be "Hierarchs in my Rolodex," but would I have to disclose the numbers on national television?

I am not sure what the Final Jeopardy question should be. When I asked one of those hierarchs what he thought, he replied. "Make the answer 'Michael Sean Winters' and the question is, 'Who has way too much time on his hands?' "