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by NCR Staff

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In a recent commentary for NCR, Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine says that the U.S. bishops contemplating a declaration that some public officials are unworthy to receive Communion should recall that, by church doctrine, no one is worthy to receive Communion, even bishops. Following are letters to the editor responding to Kaine's commentary. The letters have been edited and for length and clarity.

I believe that all bishops and Catholics should read Sen. Tim Kaine's commentary on being a Catholic in political life. He writes for the common person and explains how those in government cannot insist that any government can write rules covering specific religious expectations as each group has different expectations of their members.

His clarity and listing other religious groups beliefs and that Catholics above all should follow Christ's first and basic rule of "Love one another as I have loved you and love your neighbor as you love yourself" do not seem to at the top of bishop's beliefs in the U.S. or those who have power and dollars to give to politics. It makes me sad and is worrisome. The hierarchy of the U.S. Catholic bishops are turning my soul away from the church as it is presenting itself to me lately.

MARY ANN HARRINGTON

Chicago, Illinois



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Sen. Tim Kaine's opinion piece, "'A Catholic senator's view on Biden and the bishops," makes it very clear that bishops attempting to draft a document that would withhold the reception of Holy Communion from Catholic politicians "who are deemed insufficiently supportive of church doctrine on human sexuality," blurs the line of the separation of church and state. It would also seriously hamper a Catholic senator's ability to function in a pluralistic society that does not universally share Catholic doctrine regarding moral standards.

What is to prevent other bishops from attempting to draft a similar document that would push to withhold Communion from those Catholic politicians who are deemed to be "insufficiently supportive" of church doctrine on racism, misogyny, voter suppression, exploitation of workers and destruction of the environment?

There is an old saw that states "You can't legislate morality." I fear that those bishops who are pushing for a draft to withhold the reception of Holy Communion from certain Catholic politicians are attempting to do just that.

THOMAS SEVERIN

Connellsville, Pennsylvania

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Thanks so much for this article. We do need a moment of sanity, humility and charity on this issue.

That said, I can't help recalling the old Monty Python bit about "The Bishop" in full bishop regalia marching down the sidewalk with like four henchmen, knocking other pedestrians out of the way as they proceeded ahead.

JIM LEIN

Minot, North Dakota

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Despite Sen. Tim Kaine's admission that he disagrees with church doctrine on abortion and the meaning of marriage he believes, nonetheless, that politicians like him should not be denied the Eucharist. His commentary was stuffed with bad reasoning and theological errors.

Let me limit myself to two of his false arguments. He actually compared the enshrining into law Catholic beliefs on the right-to-life and the meaning of marriage to the imposition of Sharia Law. Kaine fails to acknowledge that these beliefs are rooted in natural law, a universal law that forms the basis of human rights that transcends sectarian doctrines.

As for his theology of the Eucharist, Kaine exploits the very words of the liturgy "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed" concluding that everyone, no matter their degree of personal sinfulness, cannot be denied Communion, since everyone is in need of healing. Kaine completely perverts the reception of this Sacrament. To receive the healing of Christ mediated in Holy Communion — one must believe that he is in need of such healing and approach the Sacrament with sincere repentance.

Kaine is a Catholic politician who facilitates the killing of innocent human persons. Christ taught "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers and sister, you do to me." One cannot receive the body and blood of Christ and kill those who belong to him. The incongruity is staggering! The bishops need to say so!

MONICA MIGLIORINO MILLER

South Lyon, Michigan

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Sen. Tim Kaine displayed a profound lack of understanding of so many things about the Catholic theology. If it did not meet with the criteria of heresy, it's flirted with it.

Realizing this is a far-left wing publication of the Roman Catholic Church, he may find comfort in sharing his idea of what God thinks with the like-minded (despite Scripture and church teachings) but it does remove him from the definition "Catholic."

A Roman Catholic is one who is in full communion with the bishop of Rome.

Yes, the Eucharist is for both the pious and the weak, but he leaves out one important factor — one must have remorse for their sins. The Eucharist is supposed to be received after one sorrowfully confesses to an ordained member of the church who Christ empowered to forgive in his name.

We as the faithful, are called to bring justice to the world. Abortion is the direct opposite of justice. Whatever inspiration allows people to think otherwise, is nothing

short of a tragedy but they are to be recognized as embracing unjust ways.

KEN PITTMAN

Dartmouth, Massachusetts

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The Eucharist is a sacrament of healing and mercy; it is for sinners, not saints. But Sen. Tim Kaine egregiously omits the fact that 2,000 years of history and tradition, including regional synods, ecumenical councils, and innumerable decisions by countless bishops around the globe (including the bishop of Rome) have time and again invoked excommunication, not as an angry, judgmental rejection of the sinner but rather as an anguished, desperate, final resort to bring to his or her senses a soul in danger of being damned.

For just a moment, set aside the issues Archbishop José Gomez has raised. Return to 1962 when the archbishop of New Orleans excommunicated four people who publicly opposed his plan to desegregate Catholic schools. We know for certain that three of them repented before their death and were reconciled to the church before it was too late.

Was the archbishop wrong because he somehow weaponized the Sacrament? Did 20 of our 21 ecumenical councils err in calling to task those in grave error? Balancing one faith with one's authority and responsibility as an elected or appointed public servant can be rather complicated and challenging, but you cannot claim to be in full communion with the church if you set aside fundamental and foundational beliefs of the Catholic religion.

(Fr.) THOMAS A. FLOWERS

Rehoboth Beach, Delaware

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