Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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In a recent essay in First Things, retired Archbishop Charles Chaput defended EWTN and called Pope Francis a liar. NCR political columnist Michael Sean Winters wonders if Chaput, like EWTN, is headed into a schism. Below, find letters from NCR readers responding to Winters' column. The letters have been edited for length and clarity.

Goose-stepping to papal mandates isn't the measure of a truly loyal bishop. St. Paul didn't hesitate to call out the first pope when he wandered from the inclusive teaching of Christ.

JOHN A. DONNELLY

Middletown, Delaware



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At this point in time, the faithful would best be served by ignoring Archbishop Charles Chaput and his cronies. Our church needs healing and rescue from divisions. The Holy Spirit under our Holy Father is leading us to light not darkness, to hope not fault finding.

Men like the archbishop are convinced of "their" truth. Let them live with that and listen to the voice of the Spirit moving us to embrace again the church of Jesus — a humble and loving church.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina

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The article, "Archbishop Chaput calls Pope Francis a liar" points out the hypocrisy of some bishops. Francis is not their pope, Pope Benedict XVI is. If your pope is

Benedict, they can tell lies about Francis with a clear conscience — no vow broken.

A personal experience of this is Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas. He jumped on Archbishop Carlo Viganò's accusations against Francis quicker than a New York minute by coming out with a public statement read at all the Masses. A bishop can't do anything more forceful to get his message out. Yet, he's silent about Viganò being discredited. Is this schismatic?

Strickland supported Fr. James Altman, going against Altman's bishop, who said Catholics can't be Democrats. I confronted Strickland about his political inclination months before and he denied/lied saying he was not a Republican nor Trump supporter. He tried to change the subject to abortion. This is routine for right wing Republican-types in this part of deep red Texas. I asked him about the young children living in poverty and dying daily. His feeble response: "We have to start somewhere." I had the presence of mind to call him "shallow" and without sound "biblical" or "Catholic Church teaching." He would not back down from his lies. Is this schismatic?

The author states, "The people of God need to know if our bishops are leading us into schism or not." Well, you're not going to get a direct answer.

MICHAEL J. MCDERMOTT

Tyler, Texas

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I feel that NCR is being overly generous in describing EWTN as "the conservative Catholic media network." Something more like "a reactionary Christian media network" would be more apt.

EWTN is one of the main vehicles of propaganda for the schismatic reactionary church in the United States, but that does not make EWTN Catholic.

DAN SHEERIN

Kirkwood, Missouri

Advertisement

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The Archdiocese of Philadelphia has had cardinals since the early 20th century, ever since the elevation of Cardinal Dennis Dougherty. The line of cardinals was unbroken until Archbishop Charles Chaput. His successor, Archbishop Nelson Perez, has so far not been elevated. It is my opinion that he will be elevated to cardinal soon.

Chaput is apparently feeling vindictive since his culture warrior posturing has denied him elevation unlike his predecessors to the College of Cardinals. If Perez is elevated, the animus apparently felt by Pope Francis for other culture warrior prelates will be palpable. It should also send a clear message to the U.S. bishops' conference that in spite of Francis' movement toward actual synodality among all members of the church, cleric and laity, there is still only one pope.

In the run up to the 2016 election, Chaput's obsequious support for Donald Trump was also palpable. One can speculate if that fealty was driven more by principles or political pragmatism. In any event, Chaput's resignation due to retirement has limited his influence so he must rely upon EWTN to have a platform from which to preach. Certainly the audience for EWTN, like the newspaper it supports, has a limited following. In their case any publicity is beneficial whether positive or negative since it draws attention while not affecting their advertising budgets.

Since Chaput is now a minor player in the hierarchy it is likely wiser to not indulge his craving for publicity by denying him an audience for his anti-Francis rhetoric.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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Michael Sean Winters does not know the Catholic catechism. He claims that Archbishop Charles Chaput called Pope Francis a liar.

Lying, like any other sin, requires an objective moral wrong, knowledge that the act is wrong, and free commission of the act. The pope spoke of "speaking ill" and "insults." The archbishop wrote about being "unfaithful." Is the criticism to which the pope refers the same as infidelity? What about loyal opposition?

It appears that the pope and the archbishop have two different perspectives, far too subjective a situation and lacking in the moral objectivity required for a third party to label one of the first two a liar. If NCR wants to claim it is Catholic, it should learn the Catholic catechism. More importantly, it should quit promoting ecclesial polarization and work for reconciliation, or at least via media.

DAN HOUSTON

Torrance, California

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Michael Sean Winters' article about the Holy Father and Archbishop Charles Chaput reads (charitably) like low brow propaganda. He takes statements from both Pope Francis and the archbishop out of contexts purely as filler lines for his narrative.

The whole article falls apart when he claims the church has repeatedly called for universal healthcare. That is demonstrably untrue. Some bishops and church officials would like that as a political solution but the church has never taken a position on such internal national politics. He cites Raymond Arroyo criticizing the Affordable Care Act to support his contention. However, both Barack Obama and Joe Biden have acknowledged problems with the Affordable Care Act.

If you are going to write on church issues, at least be honest about the issues. Diversity of opinion is a hallmark of our faith, but scheming divisiveness is nothing short of devilish.

AMOS SHEFFIELD

Donalsonville, Georgia

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Michael Sean Winters claims that Archbishop Charles Chaput called Pope Francis a liar. That is not what he said. He said the accusation against EWTN was false. It is quite possible for the accusation to be false and for the pope not to be lying because the pope may be misinformed. Has the pope actually watched EWTN?

It is also possible for the pope to sin. We are not required to believe he is sinless, nor does this affect our loyalty. In fact, if the pope did sin, it would be quite proper to

correct him in a charitable way.

You are further polarizing the situation and this is not the way for a Catholic publication to behave.

RICHARD YATES

Manchester, England

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