Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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NCR recently published a report from staff writer Brian Fraga about how right-wing Catholic causes have received millions from a dark money group that also funded some Jan. 6, 2021 Capitol rioters, a story that should chill every U.S. prelate according to NCR political columnist Michael Sean Winters. The report was followed by a column from NCR executive editor Heidi Schlumpf explaining why NCR will continue bringing some light to connections among conservative Catholic individuals and organizations. Below are letters to the editor from NCR readers responding to

these stories. The letters have been edited for length and clarity. To join the conversation, follow the guidelines below.

I would like to thank Michael Sean Winters for his insightful article. What is happening with our U.S. bishops and cardinals is most distressing. They don't listen to Pope Francis as they should.

I miss the church of the '60s and '70s when social justice supported many pro-life issues. I am against abortion but also believe in helping the poor and immigrants fleeing a tyrannical country. Don't their lives matter also? And capital punishment is also taking a life which at one time was championed by the church. What is happening in the church today is very sad.

MARILYN COSTANZO

Uniontown, Ohio



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In response to Brian Fraga's report, I say that money should not enter into any of our Catholic institutions. If money is needed, the church would do well to vet the places from which it comes.

Maybe this is a generalization, but it would seem that many with money feel their purchasing power includes so much that they have already accrued that they now feel they can purchase God. That would include some of our wined and dined bishops.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina

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Brian Fraga's recent article on the Donors Trust and Catholic organizations was interesting and troubling. As disturbing as the role of ideology is, even more problematic to the long-term health and integrity of the church is that of a relative handful of very wealthy individuals and families.

Yes, wealthy donors have always played a role in the American Catholic Church. But this current combination of wealth, ideology and party threatens to transform at least part of the American church into something quite different than most Catholics have known. Something akin to the church in Poland; or maybe even pre-democratic Spain.

It's to in no way criticize Catholic doctrine or internal organization to observe they've always fit somewhat uncomfortably within a liberal democratic order. As that order changes in the U.S., it's not a surprise some elements of the Catholic Church will seek to help hasten and shape those changes. In fact, it would be a surprise if they didn't. But there are also Catholics who believe those changes should be resisted. Fraga's article makes clear they're up against not only those with deeply held convictions and the overwhelming majority of church history. They're also up against people with very deep pockets.

JOHN JORDAN

Washington, D.C.

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In her comments concerning the sources of funding, Melissa Moschella states that provided the funds do not come with strings attached there is no conflict with church teaching. The problem with that lay in the expectation of future contributions, the revenue stream if you will. Like any business seeking repeat customers, there is a need to market the business to those who would support it. Those Catholic entities which benefit from the largess of right-wing funding sources need to continue their appeal. Sometimes that takes the form of polarizing the church or our country based upon galvanic issues so those issues become the default position of the recipient church agency.

The article also discusses the nature of the contributions from progressive groups and progressive causes by attempting to suggest an equality of these sources. However, the motivations of the contributors to progressive causes tend more toward social justice issues. On the other hand, in my view,
the conservative contributors tend to be motivated less by church teachings but more intent upon promoting political division.

Catholic Church entities in the United States might be the beneficiaries of the largess of groups which have a political agenda but the church itself will become labelled as pawns of right-wing politics. It seems some of the prelates are more than comfortable with their choice of benefactors oblivious to any non-Christian causes they sponsor. Every organization requires revenue to operate successfully. Catholic organizations need to discern if the strings attached to their donations are strings of manipulation or give the appearance of fealty toward a political party and are not just altruistic and given with benign intent.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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Heidi Schlumpf and everyone she quoted in this article about where conservative Catholic money is going is totally spot on. I agree with her 1,000%.

This is an incredibly frightening time for those of us who actually are trying to follow Jesus Christ within our Catholic faith. I truly wonder what he would have to say were he to come back to us in human form.

I pray every day for God to send forth his spirit to renew the face of the earth, the church, and what used to be the United States of America.

MARY WUDTKE

Chicago, Illinois

Join the Conversation

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