Opinion
News



by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

February 18, 2022
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The recent firings of two Colorado teachers over a high school student's pro-choice essay led to a student walkout and concerns about "chilling effect." Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver supported the dismissals.

This school's and diocese's "scandalous behavior" is why I, in my youth, wanted to avoid parochial education. More than 50 years later, I still feel Catholic education, as

a whole, stifles thought.

The U.S. church might as well bring back the Inquisition.

RICHARD CRANK

Lawrence, Kansas



***

Elie Wiesel's words ring in my ears, mind, and heart. "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

Although the topic concerned is both delicate and complex, silence does not assist in clarification. It only fuels the fire of binary thinking, closes the mind to possibilities, disengages communication and leads to the arresting of dialogue — all of which deny the presence of divinity in all things and people.

When this occurs in a Catholic school, it also denies the catholicity of universality. It denies hearing, seeing, believing, loving, and living compassionately. A shut door allows no entry.

FRAN SALONE-PELLETIER

Shallotte, North Carolina

***

The U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of religion. The Catholic Church is not a democracy and therefore can control freedom of speech within its walls and still enjoy the protection of the U.S. Constitution because it qualifies as a protected religion.

This is the situation at Regis Jesuit High School in Aurora, Colorado, where a journalism student expressed her opinion about abortion in the journal of her department. That opinion did not agree with the church's teaching. As a fallout, her teachers were fired and by the cowardness of e-mail.

The church would argue that it exercised its duty to protect its doctrine at the expense of denying free speech within its walls.

Acts like this by the church are reminiscent of its medieval behavior only firing replaced burning at the stake.

Catholics are reminded that they their church is not a democracy. Of course, this needs to change if the church expects to regain traction.

Perhaps this Constitutional conflict would best be worked out before the Supreme Court.

DONALD F. CUDDIHEE, SR.

Greer, South Carolina

***

I need to commend NCR staff reporter Brian Fraga and NCR for publishing this report. After 16 years of working for a Catholic book publisher, I have watched with dismay how the church has lied and covered up info about priests as perpetrators.

And now we have these kinds of unethical and outrageous acts by Catholic administrators who are now bringing more shame on the church by squashing any freedom of expression. And then the church wonders why a whole generation of younger people are avoiding any contact with the church. But Fraga's report gives

others hope and for that he should be commended.

ROY M. CARLISLE

Alameda, California

***

I think it is sad that honesty was discarded in this situation where the principal's first reaction was one of gratitude for open and honest discourse, and a week later firing by email. Where is the dignity or ethics in that?

I agree that if we cannot discuss our differences, they will remain an open sore. I also believe strongly for life, perhaps that is why I can respect a person's right to peacefully disagree.

Shame again on the misguided structure of "church." If honesty and love were at the core of all we do, we would not have to do so much back peddling.

MARY STERMER

Barre, Vermont

Advertisement

***

Archbishop Samuel Aquila's actions were inappropriate and divisive. In his role as a church leader, he should act as a shepherd, leading his flock with compassion, patience, wisdom, not as a stern judge whose rigid allegiance is to the laws rather than to his people.

He acted vengefully when he influenced the firing of teachers Maria Lynch (a pro-life advocate, by the way) and Nicole Arduini. They were not afforded an opportunity to explain their decision to publish a pro-choice essay, to perhaps suggest that a student's contrary opinion may provide opportunities for in-depth discussion of the abortion issue. And, a student's thoughts should not be met with immediate condemnation. Squelching opposing ideas doesn't make them disappear.

God gave us the Commandments, but endowed us with minds capable of thinking, questioning, imagining as we make often difficult and wrenching moral decisions based on those laws. Jesus showed us how he looks into the human heart to understand the love, but also the pain and fear present there.

The best Catholic leaders need to look at the laws, but also at the hearts of their flock, following Jesus' example. Aquila's use of church doctrine as a cudgel is not the most Christ-like approach to the complex realities of life. The church needs a different kind of leadership than that exhibited by Aquila.

PATRICIA S. DEVINE

Northville, New York

***

This is an appalling failure of judgement from a Jesuit high school that I had believed to be above such cow-towing to local clerics. If the article's details are accurate, the principal (not a Jesuit, apparently) and all others complicit in firing the two faculty members who allowed the publication of a reasonable if currently unorthodox opinion on the important issue or abortion, ought to resign for failing to protect the academy from narrow-minded ideologues who are clearly at odds with the example of Pope Francis. Failing his voluntary and honorable resignation, the school board should fire him.

I offer this opinion as a lay person who served as vice president of a Jesuit College some decades ago. For very different reasons than this current intellectual cowardliness, that experience was also unproductive, but I got to know enough about the principles of Jesuit education that I have held them in high esteem ever since.

JOHN J. McDONALD

Essex Junction, Vermont

***

This article demonstrates pitiful inability of some people to communicate as demonstrated by the contradictions in the exchanges. It is my opinion that we could hope for leaders, teachers, shepherds would have the capacity to communicate more effectively.

I am grateful that you print these difficult situations so that there is a possibility of learning to improve. Unfortunately, some people seem to be trained to be dictators that generate schisms instead of growth and healing.

ROBERT THELEN

Burns, Oregon

Join the Conversation

We cannot publish everything. We will do our best to represent the full range of letters received. Here are the rules:

- Letters to the editor should be submitted to letters@ncronline.org.
- Letters to the editor should be limited to 250 words.
- Letters must include your name, street address, city, state and zip code. We will publish your name and city, state, but not your full address.
- If the letter refers to a specific article published at ncronline.org, please send in the headline or the link of the article.
- Please include a daytime telephone number where we can reach you. We will not publish your phone number. It may be used for verification.

We can't guarantee publication of all letters, but you can be assured that your submission will receive careful consideration.

Published letters may be edited for length and style.

Letters containing misinformation or misleading content without correct sourcing will not be published.

Letters to the editor are published online each Friday.

This story appears in the **Your thoughts** feature series. View the full series.