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by NCR Staff

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In a recent column, NCR political columnist Michael Sean Winters says it's past time for the Vatican to investigate two bishops in Texas, Fort Worth Bishop Michael Olson and Tyler Bishop Joseph Strickland. "In Fort Worth, there are many things we do not yet know, some of which involve personnel matters that are always shrouded in mystery to those of us on the outside," Winters writes. "In Tyler, the bishop demonstrates his incapacities in full view of the public on social media, and does so routinely." Below are letters to the editor from NCR readers responding to this

column. The letters have been edited for length and clarity.

Fort Worth Bishop Michael Olson seems to me to be just another run of the mill garbage bishop. They're a dime a dozen in the Catholic Church. Tyler Bishop Joseph Strickland, meanwhile, is a schismatic. That, I speculate, is why the Holy Father leaves him in place. He knows that if Strickland is ejected from his role as bishop of Tyler he may formalize his schism.

I doubt a visitation would accomplish anything, so I hope that the Holy Father, if he hasn't already, initiates a private dialogue with Strickland directly.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York



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While I fully believe in what Michael Sean Winters says, I want to say to him "get in line," for I dare say for 6-10 years we have been suggesting an apostolic visitation to our diocese, the Diocese of Venice, Florida.

Nearly a decade ago, 10 pastors wrote requesting such a visit for the strong-armed, authoritarian and bullying manner in which our diocese was taken over by Bishop Frank Dewane, who might be Bishop Michael Olson's twin. For nearly six years now, after being placed on leave and forcibly retired as a result of scurrilous and unfounded accusations against me by wealthy relatives of a parishioner, I have been

crying out for the attention of Rome, metropolitan, and former bishop friends, to take a closer look at the Diocese of Venice. The answer is always the same — there is nothing we can do about another bishop.

While Rome can do it, and has done it (most often for financial improprieties), I suspect there is such a large list of places that need Rome's attention. One would think that the virtual destruction of a thriving parish (St. Isabel on Sanibel Island) would be enough of a reason to take a closer look. It's clear that a simple priest's lack of justice is not a good enough reason!

(Fr.) CHRISTOPHER SENK

Fort Myers, Florida

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Michael Sean Winters calls for what is needed for the spiritual health of the body of Christ and people of God. The behavior of both bishops in Texas is reprehensible reflecting the unfortunate absolutism of some of our American hierarchy.

As reprehensible as these bishops' words and actions are, as spiritual leaders, their lack of respect and charity for the dignity of the person is clearly scandalous. Such attitudes and actions serve no purpose. How can church leaders blatantly ignore the core belief of our faith — "love one another as I have loved you." St. Paul provides a framework that safeguards the above core belief when there arise theological and pastoral disagreements. Paul states simply, "Speak the truth in charity" (Ephesians 4:15). Speak the truth to each other in love, not behind one's back, not in social media.

Bishop Joseph Strickland's ad hominem attacks on Pope Francis not only fail the test of spiritual leadership, but also fail that of effective human leadership. Winters call for a Vatican investigation that seeks the truth in love is long overdue in both cases.

(Br.) EDWARD DRISCOLL, CFX

Catonsville, Maryland

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I read with interest the article about needing to remove the bishops of Forth Worth and Tyler, Texas. I agree — especially on the Tyler bishop who effectively is pushing against Pope Francis.

It is no wonder to me that the church is losing so many younger persons and even older persons. At 72, as a lifelong musician for the church, I'm contemplating leaving that ministry because of actions like these three bishops and others — regarding Communion with San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, Kansas City, Kansas Archbishop Joseph Naumann and Baltimore Archbishop William Lori. And Naumann is my bishop (fortunately he needs to submit his retirement in two years).

MARK WUNDER

Topeka, Kansas

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I agree with Michael Sean Winters' opinion that Bishops Michael Olson and Joseph Strickland ought to be investigated. I read the article twice about Olson sacking the Catholic Charities executive director over the women's conference his organization was planning and I'm still confused about why. Olson raised questions about the event's conflict with Catholic social teaching. I'm no expert on Catholic social teaching, but I surely cannot figure out how the given reason is true.

Likewise, Winters mentioned Strickland. I have loosely followed with astonishment his actions criticizing fellow bishops and the pope. Strickland has something to say on every topic and usually it's divisive.

Winters recommends an apostolic visitation for both dioceses.

The Vatican seems to be paralyzed in taking action against bishops whose egregious behavior is scandalous. We have a well-known situation in our diocese in which a

seminarian multiple times accused of sexual assault remains under the bishop's protection and the diocese's support and which is the subject of a pending lawsuit. After many attempts to resolve the problems directly, a group of priests humbly appealed by letter to the nuncio. They received no response or acknowledgement.

As with the former president, if there is no accountability, the behavior continues and even escalates.

MARCIA MELDAHL

Powell, Tennessee

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Michael Sean Winters has taken a short cut through all the facts in the case of Bishop Michael Olson.

I have had the pleasure of working with Olson before his elevation in several liturgies. I found him a center-oriented, kind and thoughtful man of faith. I see in the Christopher Plumlee case continuity of maintaining a centrist orientation in the diocese.

Early in his tenure, Olson dismissed a rather conservative canon lawyer. Later, he declined the petition of a school to allow the Tridentine Mass. His reason was simply that they did not satisfy the qualifications and there was an existing Tridentine rite parish close by that could meet their need.

What I see connecting these three events is a consistent effort to keep the diocese on the straight and narrow path in full communion with the Bishop of Rome.

JOSEPH KOSSUTH

Irving, Texas

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