Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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Parishioners, students and alumni of Ohio State University's St. Thomas More Newman Center have called on Bishop Earl Fernandes to reconsider his decision to remove Paulists from their longtime campus ministry assignment. Following are NCR reader responses to our reporting that have been edited for length and clarity.

Earl Fernandes of the Columbus diocese was just made a bishop, arrived in Columbus in May 2022. Within a month of his arrival, he announced that he was replacing the Paulist Fathers service as the Ohio State University campus ministry leaders.

The Newman Center has always been seen as the place for those who did not feel at home or welcomed in other Catholic churches. The banner that hangs at the entrance says "All are welcome," and it was the environment that has always been a mark of the Paulists.



We were a community of students from OSU and other colleges as well as a large non-student community. The resident community has always supported the ministry and has given large financial support to the student community and acted as mentors to many of the students.

The method of the new bishop to this so quickly without ever visiting us or meeting with us has left us shocked and angry. Our alumni and resident community have sent a joint letter to the bishop. Apparently, the very essence of community has not been considered. The bishop has said he has a vision for campus ministry with the hopes of finding more vocations to the diocese candidates for the priesthood.

This is not the church of Pope Francis. The vision appears to include Latin Masses and a very conservative approach to students. It will no longer be a place that our LBGT+ persons will be welcomed to be who they are as beloved by God .

Our hope is to inform others of this unholy action. We are hoping that we can somehow maintain the Paulist Fathers here in Columbus and to be a community that experiences the best of the Catholic Church and to spread the Gospel in a welcoming and inclusive way.

MARY ELLEN THOMAS

Columbus, Ohio

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As a retired public university administrator, I was deeply disturbed by the article concerning the new bishop's decision to terminate the Paulist Fathers ministry and direction of The Newman Center at The Ohio State University.

First in my opinion, the Diocese of Columbus is a guest at this university. They don't get to dictate how to operate in a public institution of higher education, especially if a certain percentage of student funds go to support activities of the Newman Center or Newman Club. Students, faculty and staff should have a role in that process and the bishop should not have the right to determine the direction of the Newman Center without the involvement of that public community. The bishop, at best, needs to know his place. Even religious institutes and organizations need to respect the policies and practices of that specific public Institution and that includes anti-discrimination policies.

The bishop needs to slow down in his decision making and respect the rights of the Catholic students attending this public institution and determine what their wishes are. This is not an entity of the diocese, at best it's a partnership.

DENNIS POLSELLI

Fall River, Massachusetts

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In the article, we read about how that leaves a devoted gay Catholic of 53 years without a spiritual family. Could it be like in the Camden, New Jersey, diocese, where the church hopes to clean house of LGBT people and they will go away?

Bishop Earl Fernandes is a little slow on the draw as the Camden diocese eliminated their LGBT ministry, Caritas, over 20 years ago. Now the same diocese has a church, St. Peter Roman Catholic Church, hosting a Christian organization, warning of the dangers of mentioning sexual orientation in the 2020 "New Jersey Student Learning Standards - Comprehensive Health and Physical Education." Their disinformation can dangerously become misinformation with the potential of harming many people.

How can we recognize what is accurate without dialogue? How can we hold accountable both the oppositional speakers and administrators of the standards if there is no dialogue? How can we uplift the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of our children if we are not sitting of the table with love and compassion?

Why is it that the Catholic Church appears to have difficulty sitting with Jesus at the table when all God's children are present?

MARIA NINA SCARPA

Merchantville, New Jersey

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