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by NCR Staff

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At the Napa Institute's 12th annual summer conference, held July 27-31, speakers bemoaned the wider culture as hostile to authentic Catholicism, but celebrated the Supreme Court's recent overturning of *Roe* v. *Wade*. Below find NCR readers responses to our coverage that have been edited for length and clarity.

Please accept my recommendation for hazard pay and a significant bonus for staff writer Brian Fraga for sitting through and reporting on the annual Napa Institute

"whinefest."



The opportunity to hear William Barr speak! Panel discussions on new and exciting topics such as "woke" business leaders, gender ideology and critical race theory! The chance to watch wealthy Catholics who want for nothing smoke the best cigars and drink the finest wines all the while bemoaning secularism in this country! What has this fine reporter done to merit such poor treatment from his employer?

When it comes time for the 2023 Napa Institute, have mercy on Fraga. Hasn't he suffered enough?

BILL KRISTOFCO

Parkville, Maryland

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The New York Post reported the following some years back. While noting that the church has weighed in against the war in Iraq and capital punishment, Cardinal Timothy Dolan defended his silence regarding President George W. Bush's 2001 appearance at Notre Dame by saying, "On those two hot-button issues that I'd be uncomfortable with, namely the war and capital punishment, I would have to give [Bush] the benefit of the doubt, to say that those two issues are open to some discussion, and are not intrinsically evil. In the Catholic mindset … that would not apply to abortion."

If we can give the "benefit of the doubt" to elected officials on war and capital punishment, why can't we do the same for a woman and her doctor on matters of health?

Would the Napa Institute folks consider this a dangerous accommodation to the secular world?

In the heart and mind set of this Judeo-Christian boychik, the death associated with war and capital punishment are evil as well.

GENE ROMAN

Bronx, New York

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Staff writer Brian Fraga refers to the attendees at the Napa Institute conference as a collection of conservative clerics and lay Catholic business leaders. From their rhetoric, what these people have in common seems to be a disdain apparently for democracy itself.

Having paid $2,500 for attendance, it would appear the lay attendees have the resources to assist pregnant women in troubled circumstances. The government attempted to mitigate those circumstance with the child tax credit which was in effect for about one year. That program did much to enable women to continue pregnancies since some of the economic problems of child raising were partly addressed. However, I would think many of those business leaders worked to defeat that program since it necessarily involved an increase in their taxes.

The attendees of the Napa Institute apparently want to persuade the public about the abortion question and convince the majority of Americans, who are not Catholic, that the Catholic Church holds the answers. They need to add some transparency to their efforts rather than just meeting with others who are similarly affluent and like-minded. Perhaps then their mission to convince the voters in our democracy that the Catholic Church can be a leader by popular choice and not by fiat.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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NCR columnist Michael Sean Winters' column about the Napa Institute includes the passing line "no room for the divine." That is my constant fret about the Catholic right, originalism, and the ideology they thrive in. It is all about words, religion and rights, and not about gospel spirit, the justice that exceeds Scribes and Pharisees, and God as our father. It is about politics and rights about dead minds and deader love for one another.

I say this with prayer, fasting and compassion. These folks just seem to worship the idol that is religion, the golden calf encrusted with a shallow skin of religious jargon, convictions unrelated to the spirit of "love and truth" but tied to mutual belief in half-truths and consistently shallow efforts to avoid both their own and the conscience of others, both the repentance and forgiveness intrinsic to a faith-filled following of Jesus. They would rather — the word in the article is "whine" — than accept and welcome with open arms persecution as in Matthew 5.

JORIS JOHN HEISE

Bloomington, Illinois

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