Opinion
Letters to the Editor

by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

December 2, 2022
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The U.S. Catholic bishops' conference on Nov. 15 elected Archbishop Timothy Broglio , a former Vatican diplomat who has supported religious exemptions for coronavirus vaccines and has blamed gay priests for the clergy abuse crisis, as their new president. " Clearly a majority in the body of bishops still prefer a culture warrior mentality, despite the lack of effectiveness of such a strategy in the church and society," we wrote in our editorial. Following are letters to the editor responding to our coverage that have been edited for length and clarity.

The articles I read on the U.S. bishops' conference set my hair on fire. I can't bear to see the U.S. Catholic leaders turning into the Pharisees and Sadducees that lived in Jesus' time.

What would these bishops do if Jesus came back today as a fully human being? They'd probably do to him exactly what the Pharisees and Sadducees did to him when he came the first time.



My heart is breaking because I dearly love my Catholic faith, and I love it precisely because of the Second Vatican Council and what has evolved from that. I honestly do not know what I'm going to do if these hard right conservative bishops run rampant through what is good and wonderful and necessary in our church today.

And I am so, so grateful to NCR for having the courage to write and publish honestly about all this stuff because you are being Jesus' voice in this day and age, and I need you to continue to do it.

MARY WUDTKE
Chicago, Illinois

***

Is there anyone in these United States who can encourage me to believe that the U.S Conference of Catholic Bishops has anyone in mind but their own specific agenda which is not inclusive and rigid?

Their disregard for Pope Francis is a source of scandal for many including me. Unless Jesus' words on scandal have been reinterpreted by them, they might think of waking up.

JANE FRANCISCO
Charlotte, North Carolina

***

Pope Francis chooses a pastoral approach meeting people at their reality while litigious culture warriors like Archbishop Timothy Broglio choose a detached legal approach of Catholicism. Jesus chose a pastoral approach while the religious authorities of his time chose a detached legal approach. I see a pattern. Definitely a mistake!

JOE MARANDO
Burbank, California

***

I am sad beyond words. So much for being shepherds instead of Trumpets.

RICHARD LEO CRANK
Topeka, Kansas

***

Reading the editorial is like reliving a nightmare again, and again and again. The "dark side" is strong with the culture warrior bishops who reject the pontificate of Pope Francis and the Second Vatican Council. Those of us who are tired of the endless merry-go-round ride have gotten off. The church with its blind bishops is going nowhere. It's dying.

Culture warrior clerics are caught up in their own echo chamber. They know what they know and don't care to learn anything else. When an all-powerful bishop is convinced he is correct what chance is there of changing his mind?

The worst possible scenarios the church could face, and continues facing have materialized. The bishops have not been up to the task. The blame game is their

only defense. Blaming everyone but those who deserve it has not proven to be a viable option.

MICHAEL J. McDERMOTT
Tyler, Texas

***

Although I do not share your concern about our bishops choosing culture warriors as their leaders, I would have preferred to see at least one prelate in office who was elevated by Pope Francis. The U.S. bishops' conferencce reflects the polarization of our country and that polarization is equally present in every parish and in every diocese. One unfortunate aspect of what we are seeing is the most vocal of the prelates are the ones whose conservatism is most apparent. However, I don't think that necessarily makes them all culture warriors.

There are a few shepherds who can be considered progressive and certainly are in full communion with Francis. That is not to say, however, that a conservative must necessarily be opposed to our pope.

We need to step back and see how ideas and circumstances play out both with our nation politically and with our church. Archbishop Timothy Broglio has stated unequivocally that he is in communion with Francis and I take him at his word.

I think as we go forward with the synod and the church moves inexorably forward into our common future those who shepherd us will reflect the light shone by our pope's judgement and vision. I have very positive feelings about where we are headed as a nation as well as where we are headed as members of the church.

CHARLES A. Le GUERN
Granger, Indiana

Advertisement

***

The American bishops still represent what Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI wanted — loyal theocrats. Clearly, the American cardinals ignore the bishops' conference and are playing a key role in identifying prospects to replace the old

timers.

This notion of theocrats is very much reflected in not wanting to change the voter guide. The fact is, no one cares what they say and they know it. The American church plays no role in shaping and forming morality. When they speak, the faithful yawn.

The conference's staff and organization also needs to leave Washington, D.C. They think and act like government bureaucrats. They think writing papers, employing lobbyists, designing power point presentations are significant and they pat themselves on the back and congratulate each other. They should move to be with the flock and come to smell like us.

PAUL D. McLAUGHLIN
Seabrook Island, South Carolina

***

I was both saddened and a bit shocked when I recently read that our bishops were troubled and perplexed why our church was not connecting with folks in the pews, especially our young people.

From my own pastoral experiences over many decades of ministry, I would suggest that our young Catholics have not left the church, but that our church has left them. We do not see them. We do not hear them. We do not know what they are searching for. We don't even know their questions. And we often do not speak their language.

Rather than judging or condemning, we as church need to accompany our young Catholics who are struggling with a lot: identity questions, life goals, growing up too fast, stress, violence, inequality, depression, anxiety, intimacy, commitment, life's meaning and faith itself. As church, we are invited to travel with them and hear their stories — and to be enriched in the process.

Such listening is a risk and can make us feel uncomfortable, for it can widen our horizons and encourage us to rethink our positions. But isn't this precisely how Jesus lived out his public ministry? Perhaps we can do the same in these times. But will we have the humility and courage to get out there on the road and really listen?

(Deacon) DAVID J. SULEY
Silver Spring, Maryland

***

This election shouldn't surprise anyone. A majority of the U.S. Catholic bishops socialize with the rich and powerful and have embraced the heartless Republican Party whose elected officials couldn't care less about our poorest and most vulnerable citizens or desperate refugees. These men actively oppose the values of compassion and mercy Pope Francis stands for.

While there may be countless holy Catholics doing wonderful work in our world, as an institution Roman Catholicism is far from holy. It has vast wealth, huge mausoleums of buildings, and many corrupt bishops and cardinals who have sacrificed the psyches and lives of millions of children to protect the "good name" of the institution.

It insists on a ludicrous view of women that rejects the wisdom of half of the human race. (Never mind that in all the Synoptic Gospels, it is only his women disciples who follow Jesus to the cross and the tomb after all of his male disciples have fled in fear. Their reward for such loving faithfulness is to be deemed unworthy of priesthood or any leadership role in the Catholic Church.)

Most of the poorest and most vulnerable Catholics in the world are denied the comfort of Eucharist because of the lack of priests, but the hierarchs do nothing to help.

A nun friend said it succinctly: One of the greatest public relations coups of all time has been the Catholic Church's ability to convince people that it is the official

representative of Jesus Christ on earth.

SIDDIKA ANGLE
Berkeley, California

***

Besides the disappointment of the election of Archbishop Timothy Broglio for all of the reasons stated, I do not expect the bishops now to address the increased nuclear threats by United States policies and so-called updating of our arsenal.

This unexpected "fallout" — with no apology for the pun — is another side effect of the bishops' conference becoming more and more focused on its self as opposed to national and world and Pope Francis' priorities.

Their focus continues to be on the abortion issue where is it in on the broad aspects of respect for life in all its dimensions.

DAVE PASINSKI
Fayetteville, New York

***

At first, I was disappointed to hear that the bishops decided not to update the "Faithful Citizenship" document, now 15 years old. A lot has changed since 2007. We can no longer deny the impact of climate change, we experienced an attempted coup, the income and wealth gap is soaring and scourge of racism continues play out in ever more insidious ways.

On second thought, however, this move by the bishops may well be a gift from the Holy Spirit. We don't need "Faithful Citizenship." Pope Francis has given us *Laudato Si*', *Fratelli Tutti*, *Evangelii Gaudium* and numerous other statements on immigration, nuclear weapons and economic and environmental justice. The words of Francis challenge us in far deeper ways than anything we have received from the U.S.

bishops.

My prayer is that we as Catholics in the United States will allow the message of Francis to help form our consciences for faithful citizenship. We couldn't ask for a better guide.

(Sr.) KAREN M. DONAHUE, RSM
Detroit, Michigan