Opinion
Letters to the Editor

by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

May 5, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

In an open letter, more than 30 Catholic women scholars, theologians and advocates said the stringent anti-abortion activism of many U.S. Catholic leaders has ignored women's lived experience and personal discernment. Following are NCR reader responses to our coverage with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

As a trained philosopher and professor emerita I have written, taught and struggled with the ethics of the abortion debate for some years.

I have come to the realization, after framing to myself so many arguments for and against this sometimes heartbreaking decision by women, that the usual categories of explanation have been built on paternalistic, male-dominated premises. For example, these include concepts such as murder, killing, just war (where embryo is viewed as aggressor), as well as overly simplified concepts of decision making in medical practice.

I am pleased to see a reasoned debate in this panel reported in NCR today. A panel that brings hope to faithful Catholics.

BLANCHE PREMO HOPKINS
Aiken, South Carolina



***

It doesn't surprise me that you would take this pro-abortion stance. I would push back that it's the pro-abortion side that wants to shut down discussions and keep it centered on a generic topic of not understanding what a woman is going through, but the pro-life movement is getting better at understanding your tactics and how to counter them.

You want a discussion? Let's start. Please answer this: when, as a Catholic, do you say life begins? Conception, six weeks, 20 weeks, at birth, three months after birth? Your answer greatly matters, so take your time.

Once you answer that, we can continue with the discussion you say you want. We will continue to pray for you. My wife had a miscarriage and went through all of that, so we understand what it means to a woman. God did bless us with four children.

HUGH DENNING
Denver, Colorado

***

The theologically progressive minority in the U.S. episcopate should get together to organize a document producing dialogues on contentious doctrinal issues like abortion, LGBTQI rights/identities, sex, the priestly ordination of women and the role of women in the church, etc.

These dialogues, which would be ongoing, would be modeled on ecumenical dialogue, with the resulting documents structured similarly to what we've seen come out of formal ecumenical dialogues.

So imagine if the panel in this video got together with some people selected by more open minded bishops in the U.S. to dialogue about abortion over a number of sessions and eventually produced a document that details points of agreement and disagreement, the whys behinds those agreements and disagreements, and possibilities for further dialogue moving forward.

Imagine if instead of "Doctrinal Note on the Moral Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body" we got a document like the one I've described? Theologically progressive bishops need to be proactive on this.

JEFFREY JONES
Hamburg, New York

Advertisement

***

What a refreshingly mature approach appears in the article "Catholic mothers, scholars urge US bishops to listen to women on abortion."

It seems time to realize that "intrinsic good" and "intrinsic evil" exist only in the mind. Morality exists in the world of reality. Reality involves acts, mitigating circumstances, discernment, prudential judgment, and the primacy of conscience. Isn't it time for the bishops' edicts to recognize this?

ED HOEFFER
Cincinnati, Ohio

***

It is indeed unfortunate that 60 years ago when Roe v. Wade was decided, the reaction from some members of our clergy embraced the political posturing of extreme conservatives and denied that women have rights to privacy and agency. Rather than addressing the problem as a wrong choice by individuals whose agency should allow them personal choices, many of our church leaders instead followed a

political pathway in the hope that they would curry favor with a political party which they perceived to be ascendant.

The history of these past 60 years marked the polarization which ensued and has done nothing to bring our church together to solve social problems. Rather, the acrimony divided us and too many clerics are engaged in that divisiveness. Political calculations seemed to take precedence over pastoral concerns. If the latter were preeminent, then the U.S. bishops' conference would have championed the government establishing and promoting social programs to assist women with troubled pregnancies.

What we have seen instead is recrimination of politicians who want to extend the social safety net particularly if those politicians are Democrats. The Child Tax Credit raised millions out of poverty and had the potential to convince countless women that abortion would be the wrong choice since one of the primary considerations such women confront, lack of income, would have been addressed. Instead we heard nothing from the U.S. bishops' conference to support this popular and necessary program; likely because those who championed it were not the party of the bishops and their benefactors.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN
Granger, Indiana