Opinion
Letters to the Editor

by NCR Staff

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Controversial Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, planned a procession Friday, June 16, in Los Angeles sponsored by a collection of right-wing Catholic media outlets and activist groups in protest of the Los Angeles Dodgers honoring the pro-LGBT group Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence during Pride Night at Dodger Stadium, reported Brian Fraga. Following are NCR reader responses to this story with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

It appears Bishop Strickland can't get enough media coverage in his own diocese so he needs to take his show on the road. I would have thought he would not be welcome seeking publicity in another diocese unless his sentiments are shared by the local ecclesial leaders.

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence is a satirical group that raises money for HIV treatment. Likely the Catholic Church has never provided the same service if they are involved in HIV treatment at all, given their animus toward the LGBTQ community. I have no doubt the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence will have a successful fund drive as a result of the publicity, not to mention their award from the Dodgers. That award serves to highlight the great work which the "Sisters" are performing, and without that publicity those efforts might not be as widely known.

It seems that acting in self righteous pique to interfere with the activity of a group which certain prelates hate only results in more success for that group. The publicity which Strickland craves resulted in negative publicity for him but more awareness of

the "Sisters" group and the charity they are funding.

I am not a baseball fan, but I will look upon the Los Angeles Dodgers as a franchise which has involved itself in community service. They are to be commended since they did not cave to reactionary and bigoted groups who, in spite of their profession of Christianity, seem to have a problem with Christian charity.

CHARLES A. LEGUERN
Granger, Indiana



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Now that the moral morass that once was Texas has been cleansed, I want to congratulate Bishop Strickland on his foray into the swamp that is California and especially the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. I don't care how much money they raised for HIV/AIDS patients or how impressive their charitable works are. Strickland and his wealthy buddies at Church Militant, and other groups pouring money into his crusade, are right to take umbrage at this outrage.

But I have a question or two for Strickland:

What do you think of your Catholic Governor, Greg Abbott, putting migrants on buses and sending them to distant cities with little regard to their needs for food or medical attention? I heard the number is around 19,000! There's got to be something in the Bible that covers this. I'm going to look it up and see if Jesus ever talked about folks such as these.

And you have lots of guns in Texas! Sometimes they even have been used for more than just shooting beer cans off ranch fences. Have you considered looking into that so children and others can go about their lives with some hope of normalcy?

Enjoy your trip to the Dodger game. I'm sure someone from CatholicVote will treat you to a hot dog and a beer as a reward for cleaning up The Golden State.

BILL KRISTOFCO
Parkville, Maryland

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Attending a Dodgers/Giants ballgame in San Francisco in years past was an unforgettable experience. Who could forget viewing the batting skills of Willie Mayes at Seals Stadium, the fielding expertise of Kevin Mitchell and Will Clark at Candlestick Park or the catching brilliance of Buster Posey at the newest venue, now Oracle Park? Those were the days when baseball was in its purest form and not a catchall for posturing one's cultural identity before massive crowds, many of whom now leave stadiums after such demonstrations disappointed, conflicted and downright angry. The current "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence" brouhaha" is a case in point.

It may be true that the "Sisters" were among the first to minister to AIDS victims when the virus first appeared in 1981. And who dared mock them then for their loving ministry to the afflicted when few others had the courage to step up to the plate? One must not forget the good example the original group set for the countless AIDS ministries that followed.

Still, the Dodgers management is way off base introducing such current nonsense into their sports arena, which is not the appropriate place for awards of this nature, and is a publically vocalized embarrassment to Christian members of the LGBTQ+ community itself. Bishop Strickland and his Francis hating gang will pray and process. Others will blackball Dodger's games. And some of the rest of us will take a deeper look at church and national politics and pray for discernment.

NANCY MCGUNAGLE
Kalispell, Montana

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My first question is how can a bishop who actively defends the faith be called a "firebrand"? Given the heinous act(s) portrayed by this group — how can it be wrong for the faithful to "push back"? My next question is why is this author sympathetic to this particular group? I'm all for loving the sinner, hating the sin, but at some point one has to take a stand and say, "this is wrong.'' These "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence" are an excellent example of sinfulness. Why the apologetics for the indefensible? I would love to know the thought process behind this. The most charitable thing a Catholic can do is pray for their conversion and to find Christ.

NICK CAMPBELL
Alexandria, Virginia

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I take exception to Brian Fraga's contradictory description of Bishop Strickland as "an outspoken conservative prelate who has accused Pope Francis of undermining the Catholic faith." A Catholic "conservative prelate" will, by definition, not accuse the pope of undermining the Catholic faith. Are old Catholics conservatives now then? Like old Catholics, Strickland, Schneider, Viganò, etc. all manifestly take exception to the First Vatican Council, which is now what exactly, a theologically progressive council?

JEFFREY JONES
Hamburg, New York

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The anti-Catholic trope serves the clergy to manipulate public opinion. Its purpose is to warn others to back off to allow the church to do whatever suits its culture war purposes.

Comedy that raises charitable funds is now blasphemy? Moral law teaches one's intent is primary. Yet the hierarchy will protest the Dodgers and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence because it is the latest right-wing agenda item. This is a political statement. The bishops are playing to their base.

On a scale of 1-10 of issues facing the U.S. church, where does this rank?

Can we count on the bishops to march in protest of another execution? Will they make a statement calling for abolishment of the death penalty as murder — never acceptable according to the Catechism?

Will they gather at the site of the next mass shooting to have a Mass of Reparation for the lives taken because guns are the gods of right-wing extremists? Will they speak against the gun industry and their lobbyists?

Will the bishops gather at a homeless encampment and pray for those marginalized by society's values, largely shaped by the Republican Party: pull yourself up by your bootstraps through hard work; those living in poverty choose that life because they aren't motivated. The list goes on.

The priorities deemed important to them are those they hope to get the most political mileage out of. Freedom of speech and freedom of religion be damned. The bishops have taken a page from the political right-wing playbook.

MICHAEL J. MCDERMOTT
Texas, United States