Opinion
Letters to the Editor

by NCR Editorial Staff

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September 15, 2023
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In a Sept. 7 editorial, the NCR editors said that the soap opera drama orchestrated by Fort Worth Bishop Michael Olson against the Discalced Carmelite nuns of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity has everything to do with Olson's heavy-handedness and cruel treatment of women religious. And they hope the Vatican will stop his abusive power play. Following are NCR reader responses to this editorial with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

It is without doubt that this mess is a scandal to the faithful. And it has been orchestrated, but by whom? The bishop or the convent? The faithful and the news might be better served if we who do not know all the facts stepped back from offering opinions and prayed for a conclusion to this quagmire.

JOSEPH KOSSUTH
Irving, Texas



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A very interesting religious dispute. Readers will need a lot more facts before accepting this kind of conclusive, one-sided opinion. This is the kind of we-are-right opinion one reads in the Register. To assert the bishop must be wrong because other women’s communities have been mistreated is silly.

JOHN VENEGAS
Chatsworth, California

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Bishop Olson was once counted as a normal person, a bishop who could be trusted to do his job, while other bishops were attracting negative press attention for their crimes and sins of commission and omission. Now it's Olson's turn as another rotten apple in the church's barrel of too many rotten ones. It only took the firm hand of the prioress and resilience of the good sisters and their supporters to show the evil, mean-spiritedness of Bishop Olson and his supporters. What is happening now has happened too many times and will continue unabated until the church is truly reformed.

MICHAEL J. MCDERMOTT
North Brookfield, Massachusetts

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Bishop Olson appears to hold a "the ends justify the means" attitude which has been part of the church's history. The original controversy has been largely supplanted by the current rhetorical exchanges between the bishop and the congregation. Understanding the original reasoning and any possibility of finding common ground looks to have become impossible.

When the congregation originally sued the bishop, the courts stated it was a church issue and the courts would not become involved. That appears to have denied the sisters equal protection under the law by forcing them to confront the bishop under canon law. The editorial's reference to the authoritarianism that defined the episcopacy in the church's earlier history was both salient and sobering.

It seems the bishop's attitude in this instance, coupled with his history with Catholic Charities, shows a misogyny, not just the paternalism which characterizes too many of his fellow bishops. There is a complete lack of dialogue, just edicts from the administration, which the subordinates are expected to obey if not embrace.

Synodality is resisted and feared by clerics whose privileges and power may be reduced as a result. What happened to the Sisters of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity portends what may be in store for other religious communities, if not entire parishes, if the views, wishes and abilities of the faithful are ignored in favor of the caprice of clerics who are more sensitive to their own power than they are sensitive to the pastoral needs of the faithful.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN
Granger, Indiana

This story appears in the **Arlington Carmelites in controversy** feature series. View the full series.