Opinion
Letters to the Editor



by NCR Staff

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In an NCR Voices column Oct. 18, Sr. Christine Schenk reflected on the LGBTQ policies issued in the Cleveland Diocese and on the response of her Sisters of St. Joseph community. Following are NCR reader responses to this opinion with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

I appreciate Schenk’s article on the direction of the Cleveland Diocese’s parish and school’s policy on sexuality and gender identity. It is heartbreaking to read and, at the same time, validating because our family has had experience with ignorance and hate from our local parish on our family members. We are not in Cleveland, though a similar message of intolerance and ‘disgust’ is communicated to LGBTQ+ communities in Portland and Oregon overall.

The American Catholic Church has lost its way regarding healthy human development. Can the church be more rational and informed on human sexuality in general? I hoped there would be more measured thinking after the priest sex abuse scandals.

KAREN CHENIER
Lake Oswego, Oregon



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Fantastic news from the Diocese of Cleveland! Prayers are being answered, they are following Christ’s guidance. Christ didn’t condemn the woman, but told her to sin no more.

HUGH DENNING
Denver, Colorado

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This is a heart-rending piece. The cause of the problem is the black and white world of the Catholic Church. Progress has been made in the fields of science, yet the church fails to revisit its understanding of natural law in the context of new knowledge. Why are the worldviews of the times of Jesus, Greek philosophers and St. Aquinas the history points on which all else rests?

The moral injury purposefully inflicted upon people in the name of their God is mind boggling. It's their God because it is a god of their making, not the God whose reality this creation is. God is timeless, unbounded and ever revealing, yet humankind's limited abilities prefer to control their intake of God for numerous self-serving reasons. Is it too hard to keep expanding one's horizons? Does it pry one out of their comfort zone?

This dynamic is at work right now at the Vatican where Pope Francis, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is attempting to lead the church to be and do more. What a struggle the poor man has driving his team of resistant oxen to advance the church into the 21st C! Is the load too heavy for those who would rather be out in a green field of sweet grass than laboring to bring about a church inclusive of everyone? The church said to have been begun by Jesus, where everyone was welcome, has morphed into a lockstep cult of museum attendees. The world will not wait nor will the Holy Spirit. Jesus' question of finding faith on Earth when he returns remains open.

MICHAEL J. MCDERMOTT
North Brookfield, Massachusetts

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The comparisons of the Diocese of Davenport and Cleveland regarding their reactions and policies regarding their LGBTQ populations is a stark view of our polarized church and culture. Where the former is accepting of all as children of God and will walk with them showing respect and understanding, the latter seeks to return to the days of judgmentalism and ostracism.

Among the issues which the current synod is addressing is how the LGBTQ community can be welcomed into the church. People need to feel welcome as

children of God and not be subject to the ignorance that pervaded earlier times. Should the synod adopt Pope Francis' vision that all people are welcome, some of the conservative prelates will have a difficult time reconciling their own prejudices with the expectations of the faithful who will embrace a more open church.

Any institution that bases exclusivity on archaic views will lose not only the people who are affected but others who sympathize with them. The church is seeing a diminution of attendance. That will not change if people are treated as second class or considered disordered. Institutions rise and fall based upon their reputations. If the bishop of the Cleveland Diocese believes he is reflecting the views of the majority of his people, he is placing pragmatism ahead of piety. The result of that shortsightedness will be his loss of credibility as a leader and as a bishop.

The problem with our church largely rests on too many self-referential clerics who refuse to understand how our society is changing, so they will consign their own churches to irrelevancy.

CHARLES A. LEGUERN
Granger, Indiana