Opinion
Letters to the Editor

by NCR Staff

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Following are NCR reader responses to recent news articles, opinion columns and theological essays with letters that have been edited for length and clarity. These "Letters to the Editor" appear in the Feb. 2–15, 2024 print issue.

Role model

In response to two recent articles regarding Archbishop Sample banning Mass from an ecumenical community in Oregon, the question is, "Just what are the real issues?" This heavy handedness is no way to lead the church (ncronline.org, Jan. 3, 2024 and Jan. 8, 2024). And this is not his first strong handedness. It was only a few months ago and again with no dialogue that he dissolved the Dept. of Catholic Education. One cannot attend Spirit of Grace's Masses without experiencing the true humility and Jesus-like presence of their ministers, both Catholic priests and Lutheran pastors who have served this community. One cannot witness their Sunday worship without being moved by their caring, welcoming model of love. Spirit of Grace is a model community for all Catholics!

SUZANNE AVISON THIEL
Portland, Oregon



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Ray of hope

Excellent article by Roberts on Portland Oregon Archbishop Sample (ncronline.org, Jan. 8, 2024). I'm one who slowly walked away from the established church because of people like Sample. Portland deserves better. The only ray of hope has been Francis trying to help us to understand what Christian means and how we, as lay people, can pursue the essence of what being Christian really means. My greatest fear, not just for the church but for lay people, is losing him. It is a nightmare scenario.

ADELAIDE STREETER
Portland, Oregon

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Always blessed

I am in awe that in *Fiducia Supplicans* Pope Francis declared Catholic priests can bless remarried, divorced and same-sex couples (NCR, January 5 – 18, 2024). This revolutionary decree should have taken place years ago. Are we not a church that should be opening its door to all who seek refuge? Or is it to be opened for just the chosen few that we consider worthy? Who am I to say that a member of the LGBTQ+ community doesn't have a right to be a member of the Catholic Church community? The document issued by the pontiff asks that they "may mature and grow in fidelity to the Gospel, that they may be freed from their imperfections and frailties, and that

they may express themselves in the ever increasing dimension of the divine love." Isn't this what it is all about? In the editorial by Francis DeBernardo he mentions that no other group's sexuality comes under such incredible scrutiny by the church hierarchy as those attracted to the same sex — not those who are young and experimenting with sexual behavior nor those married using birth control, for example. Francis stated, "Every brother and every sister will be able to feel that, in the Church, they are always pilgrims, always beggars, always loved, and, despite everything, always blessed."

STEPHEN G. SMITH
Commack, New York

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Christian nationalism

Winters' column on Martin Luther King and "Christian nationalism" rightly emphasizes King's message of freedom and justice for all, but I don't think King would describe himself as a "Christian nationalist" (ncronline.org, Jan. 15, 2024). He believed in the separation of church and state. It may be true that "Those to whom this epithet is typically applied represent a sliver of Christians who happen to possess lousy theology and a soft spot for fascistic politics." But this "sliver" is well organized and its powerful voice is amplified far beyond its numbers by social media and well-funded organizations. Tim Alberta's book, The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, clearly describes the dangers that "Christian nationalism" represents to Christianity and to our democracy.

JIM PURCELL
Los Gatos, California

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'Mean machine'

The spirit of the Trump-winning Iowa caucus may be best expressed in the statement of one MAGA enthusiast, "Trump may be narcissistic and cocky but he gets the job done" (ncronline.org, Jan. 17, 2024). While Winters conveyed a veiled wish for Trump to slip on a banana peel between now and Super Tuesday, his friend

described our former president and his supporters as "mean." Whether the offenders in their eyes are Iowa Christian evangelicals or simply Mr. and Mrs. Mainstream America, it may take a temporary "mean machine" to bring our country back to a semblance of what they believe our founders intended.

NANCY MCGUNAGLE
Kalispell, Montana

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Thank You, Australia!

In his account of the Australian church's "outsized" influence on the global synod process, White quoted Melbourne Archbishop Peter Comensoli as being amused "that there was such a fuss over using round tables at the synod," and as explaining that in Australia, "That is not some amazing new thing. You sit with the people" (NCR, Dec. 22, 2023 – Jan. 4, 2024). But in the U.S., following his experience as a delegate to the Synod in Rome, Jesuit Fr. James Martin reported in a presentation in New York that he felt excitement whenever he entered the Paul VI Audience Hall, with 35 round tables where 350 equal-voiced Synod delegates — from cardinal to lay church leader — spent 90% of their time listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit as the other nine delegates at their tables spoke in equal time slots. Revolutionary.

THOMAS A. CAFFREY
New York, New York