Opinion
Letters to the Editor



by NCR Staff

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April 19, 2024

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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.

Women in the Church

I would like to thank Carolyn Ancell for her life of ministry and her beautiful expression of keeping the vision of women in the Catholic Church in her sights (ncronline.org, April 13, 2024).

She sounds like a model for people who want a better church, and feels she is part of the process, not a quitter. Indeed in a discussion with sister graduates of our Catholic highschool, around 2005, we ladies agreed that we are the Church. Priest scandals were prominent at the time, but we did not excuse ourselves from making ourselves responsible for a better Church..

I imagine that many people found solace and belonging in Carolyn Ancell's wide outreach.

I would love to be that kind of a Catholic.

Thank you to her and to NCR for printing her story.

ANN MARIE SAIDY
Curridabat, Costa Rica

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Bishop Gumbleton

Upon his passing, what can we say about Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton (ncronline.org, April 4, 2024)? Plenty! Yes, he was a soft-spoken man, always kind

and gracious. He was courageous yet humble, but never timid. He was always a good shepherd to his sheep. In dark times, he never abandoned us, nor we him. We heard his voice and embraced his message "To Be Doers of the Word." Through his example, Bishop Tom showed us how important the work of social justice is, especially in today's war-torn world and polarized society. He taught us how to speak for those who had no voice, to care about the poor and marginalized, to reach out and advocate for those on the outside looking in. His far-reaching efforts became our mission, too. There was no "us against them" mentality. It has always been about all of us as his work encompassed everyone. He invited all to the table and even offered them his seat. Bishop Tom set the tone and laid the groundwork that we must now continue, and we who believed in what he did over his lifetime will see to that. I can visualize a multitude of happy, heavenly souls awaiting his arrival, cheering "Well done, Tom!" As we bask in the glow of the Easter Season, may the Risen Lord embrace Bishop Tom Gumbleton and welcome him to live in His Presence for eternity.

MARILYN AND TOM GIACOBASSI
Clinton Township, Michigan
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Agency and privacy

One of the principal roles the bishops might play is to encourage all their flock to vote and to assert that democracy is not something we may take for granted (ncronline.org, April 15, 2024). Albeit, there are a few prelates who will wish to encourage the faithful to vote for those they feel, at least verbally, espouse the pro-life mantra whether or not in practice they do anything remotely consistent within the pro-life ethic. Their dissonance between advocacy for one church teaching coupled with the all too apparent dismissal, if not denial, of all other teachings leads many to question the political agenda of some of our ecclesial leaders.

Mr. Winters cites Rerum Novarum as a seminal teaching from Pope Leo XIII which addresses the rights of working people. However, it is my understanding that Pope Leo did not understand how the laity, those with limited education in particular, could choose their own government. He thought only the elite should govern and, of course, with the best interests of the people in mind. History teaches us that autocracies fail to address the real needs of the people. Jefferson wrote that the people establish governments and may change or abolish what they have created as their needs change and if the government fails to address those needs. The bishops would be wise to consider Jefferson's observations in our upcoming election rather than reflexively embrace that of Pope Leo.

Unfortunately, we can expect the USCCB's quadrennial publication Faithful Citizenship to give brief, if any mention, to the existential threat of climate change nor to address issues such as the need to reinforce the social safety net. The voters' guide will no doubt make abortion the only issue in spite of the fact that many states have essentially outlawed abortion only to have plebiscites reverse those policies. With abortion, the bishops seem to see individual trees but ignore the forest. That forest is the spectrum of civil rights among which is personal agency and privacy. Ending abortion by fiat will not work but our ecclesial leaders, like Pope Leo, do not understand the will of the electorate.

CHARLES A LE GUERN
Granger, Indiana

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