

[Opinion](#)



by NCR Staff

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Each month, NCR gathers up a sampling of letters to the editor from our readers in response to articles and columns that appear on NCRonline. This week, we will focus on letters received in June 2020. To join the conversation, follow the guidelines at the end of this post.

The couples in question in "[When wedding vows conflict with the Catholic workplace](#)" were not married in the church so the church has neither the right to complain nor act against them. Imagine if the church would decide to make members responsible for auto titles, property sales, restaurant licenses and taxes!

Curiously, I know couples, each party married only legally in the U.S. and later divorced, that were later allowed to sacramentally marry each other or another Catholic. I also know couples, married legally and in the Catholic Church, who were denied the ability to legally divorce by the church and each denied to marry another within the church.

Now, just after Holy Week and Easter, we again learn of the forgiveness of Jesus of we who caused his death by sin, of those who crucified him, and of his chosen who denied Jesus or abandoned him.

Rhetorical question: What am I missing?

DAVID F. DANIELS

Green Bay, Wisconsin

My comment is on the "[Editorial: Stop judging, and welcome LGBT Catholics 'in good faith.'](#)"

Conservative Christian LGBT discrimination is mistakenly Bible-based. Actually, man and woman were created genderless. Genesis 2:25, "The man and his wife were both naked, yet they felt no shame." Gender was introduced immediately after taking the bite of the forbidden fruit. Genesis 3:7, "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked." Gender then is one of the fallouts of sin.

The church's resistance to LGBT and its gender fluid paradigm, is in effect an obstacle to a return to the pre-Fall condition where genderlessness prevailed and the gay-straight, male-female binary did not exist. I think modern scholarship calls this Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point, a topic that is receiving considerable attention among the more liberal theologians.

TOM DEVINS

Spring Branch, Texas



I've only recently found out about NCR and in your recent survey that I've been asked to fill in I've described it by the word diversity. Nowhere else I could find news on Vatican, migrants, women religious, theologians, environment, missionaries and the LGBT Catholics as well.

I'm always thrilled with the objective and timely reporting on these and many more various themes you cover. Recently, however, I've come across an online source that refers to the NCR as "anti-Catholic" and the only thing that came to my mind is your obvious support of LGBT themes as well.

The thing is, by the unconditional support that you are calling us to for sexual minorities, you're actually calling also for approval of the acts of intimacy that any sexually active human being necessarily seeks to fulfill (unless vowed or disabled against those).

I hope that there will be a timely clarification of your opinion and that you'll prove wrong those that call you anti-Catholic, in order to stay in unity with the church since other teaching leads you to the path that isn't the truth nor life.

BERISLAV BULAT

Virovitica, Croatia

Thank you, Fr. Charles Bouchard, for the article "[Do the Trump tradeoffs jeopardize fundamental aspects of our faith?](#)" Your thoughts were clearly expressed through fundamental Catholic underpinnings (scripture, human dignity and grace) and capture the challenge me and our family hold with this administration, and with some American conservative Catholics.

My husband and I have grown children, and they echo these key points and concerns and point out the contradictions and the hypocrisy they see with some Catholics in power. For instance, when they see some Catholics and politicians who are vehemently opposed to pro-choice, while they are simultaneously pro-death penalty. Also, some who herald individual rights over community wellbeing and safety.

This current administration and the pandemic have highlighted this tension. I am delighted to read a well-informed article on the matter and hope that the dialogue remains open.

KAREN CHENIER

Portland, Oregon

At first communions, the pastor would ask, "How many boys want to be priests?" Then "How many girls want to be sisters?"

This one year, he asked, "[How many of you want to be priests?](#)" One little girl raised her hand drawing applause from the congregation. He didn't ask the question next year.

EMORY WEBRE

St. Louis, Missouri

Why can't women be ordained priests? Because we refuse to discuss the possibility of ordaining women.

In April 1993, my article "Some of the best priests are women" was printed in U.S. Catholic. Response? Crickets. My argument is that there are many women who are priests. Many women serve as mediators of God's word and presence in myriad manners.

When I was ordained, the bishop asked, "Is he worthy?" and the scripted response from a representative of those responsible for formation is, "I have inquired among the people of God, and he has been found worthy."

Inquire among the people of God. Many women will be found worthy, ready, able and willing to serve the community as preachers of the word and celebrant of sacraments.

(Fr.) RICHARD G. MALLOY, SJ

Baltimore, Maryland

When Bishop Richard Sklba was president of the Catholic Biblical Association, the group returned the answer "no" to Pope John Paul II's question as to whether there was anything in Scripture that opposed women's ordination. Yet women are clearly named as followers and ministering to Jesus in Mark 15:40-41 and Matthew 27:55-56.

Let us look at the question Paul raises in Galatians that for the baptized "There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, there is no longer male and female" (Galatians 3:28). In the face of that statement do we dare assert any distinction between my baptism as a male and the baptism of a female?

What connection is there between the sacrament of baptism and ordination? Does ordination flow out of baptism? Are Episcopalian churches giving a prophetic lead in ordaining women? Is the papal reluctance in the name of tradition based on the desire to avoid splitting the Catholic Church? Could Pope John Paul II make an assertion that bound the church for all time? Is the major issue in this question one of culture? Is this also true within our church culture?

Let us identify and name the right obstacle to ordination and blame it neither on Jesus or the Scriptures which must challenge all cultures.

KIERAN FENN

Onehunga, New Zealand

I am now 70 and married to my wife of 15 years, Nancy, whom I met over 20 years ago when I was a Dominican priest. I was a Dominican for 33 years, ordained for 25 years, before I left to marry my beloved.

While a priest and now as a parishioner, I have seen both girls and boys as altar servers, and many times have seen girls as better and more competent than the boys. I have seen and listened to women both as teachers in our schools, and many who have preached in our churches (oh, yes, the proper canonical term is "give a reflection"), and they were more knowledgeable and better preachers than some or many of the clergy I have known.

I have also met women ministers of other churches: Why not ours?

ROBERT MARZULLO

Shoreline, Washington

In his column "[For Catholics, wearing a mask is an expression of true freedom](#)," Mike Jordan Laskey seizes upon the perfect teachable moment in American society to explain and contrast the Christian understanding of true freedom with that of the American cultural understanding of freedom. He correctly points out that the major flaw in our cultural understanding of freedom is that it is overly individualistic, emphasizing my personal freedom to do whatever I want, while disregarding the impact or consequences of my choices upon others. Put simply, our cultural understanding of freedom is freedom "for me" in contrast to the Christian understanding of freedom "for others."

The Christian understanding of freedom as "freedom for others" allows for the possibility of an individual or group of people to forgo doing something that would be beneficial to them in order to insure the freedom of others. The wearing of a mask may restrict my freedom to talk or breathe normally but it protects or frees others from being exposed to a potentially deadly virus.

Finally, democratic societies only achieve true freedom for all of its members whenever citizens take responsibility to act for the good of all. Once again, this may require us to act out of our comfort zones for the good of the larger society. The individuals who are peacefully and safely protesting racism and police brutality are current examples of people acting out of their comfort zones for the safety and freedom of others.

THOMAS SEVERIN

Connellsville, Pennsylvania

Advertisement

I salute the [passing of my old friend Maryknoll Fr. Robert Astorino](#), the founder of UCA News. I knew him personally for many years and was bureau chief of UCAN Pakistan.

I admired his strong sense of professional journalism, coupled with his love for the church in Asia. Thanks to his drive and energy, UCAN was able to bring the vibrant stories of Asian Catholics to a worldwide audience.

The church in Pakistan is generally called "the unknown church." But Astorino gave a great impetus to this young church. He encouraged, trained and supported budding journalists of Pakistan. He asked me to serve on the board of directors of UCAN, which I gladly did.

Especially now in this global pandemic age , when life in Asian cities has come to a screeching halt, there is even more urgent need for Asian Catholic journalists to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on the daily lives of the poor and marginalized.

So it is our hope that the work of UCAN , and the vision of Astorino will become all the more relevant and necessary.

(Archbishop) LAWRENCE J. SALDANHA

Toronto, Ontario

I read [Fr. Daniel P. Horan's column on gender ideology](#) in an attempt to see another perspective, and also simultaneously ordered his book, but I came away astonished. And fearful that his book will be as useful as the article.

He cites as a linchpin of his argument and the advanced state of the question newsy pieces involving a leading scholar, yet professor of comparative literature, Judith Butler. Never heard of her.

Dutifully following the citations, I learned about political freedom and individual choice a la Beauvoir. And this spells the end for, as Horan calls them, so-called Vatican experts? It disappoints me that Horan's entire gender ideology case turns on that foundation. I would have preferred something more substantive, involving for example genetic predisposition.

If this is the best argument or explanation relying on so-called leading scholars that can be offered, even in summary fashion, I fear even more for the consequences of gender ideology.

(Fr.) ERIC POWELL

Normal, Illinois

Thank you for [Sophie Vodvarka's article on travel companies making money](#) on canceling religious pilgrimages because of COVID-19. The un-Catholic behavior of these companies is appalling. Yet the actions of the companies described in the article pale in comparison to that of Nawas, a Connecticut-based religious travel company.

I was scheduled on a May 2020 Oberammergau Passion Play Tour which was canceled. We had already paid Nawas the full tour price. After cancellation, Nawas extorted a \$1,150 per person cancellation fee unless you agreed to participate in a

2022 Tour to Oberammergau. The travel insurance sold by Nawas has been unhelpful to date.

I encourage Vodvarka to investigate Nawas in a follow-up to her fine investigative piece.

TERRY WAITROVICH

Portland, Oregon

This article really annoyed me. I am an ambassador at Dynamic Catholic and I read your article some months ago regarding the money that may be going into Mathew Kelly's personal businesses. I was surprised and concerned about that.

Now I have just read your article regarding the lack of a full refund for people who have paid for sometimes, expensive pilgrimages. It seems pilgrims are being squeezed and I cannot think this is a Christian approach.

I have written to Dynamic Catholic to say that if they don't reconsider, I am going to cancel my monthly payments to the ambassadors club. I think their stance, especially to seniors in their 80s, is unconscionable.

BERNADETTE JORDAN

Salmon Arm, British Columbia

We are writing to express our extreme sadness with the news that there is a document, "[Policy and Complementary Norms on Sexual Identity in School Ministries](#)," produced within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, allowing for the exclusion of our transgender students. Last year, we lost well respected teachers and guidance counselors due to archdiocesan policies, but to broaden this to children seems even more cruel and unnecessary. With everything going on in our country, this should be a time of healing, not further divisiveness.

As teachers in the archdiocese, we strive to create welcoming and safe classrooms for our students, including our LGBTQ+ students who desperately need adults in the building who support them regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This is not a hypothetical; these students do exist and this policy will hurt them immensely. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2019, transgender teens had higher rates of suicidal ideation, plans, attempts and attempts requiring medical care compared to cisgender teens. We consider this a life issue.

Many people wonder why a transgender student would choose a Catholic school. We hope that answer is the same for them as for any other student. They want to learn in an environment in which their whole person is respected. As Catholics, we are taught to welcome all children as Christ did. "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14).

KELLY WILLIAMS-IHLENDORF and LISA JOHNSON

Indianapolis

Deepest thanks for Peter Feuerherd's superb piece on the [reinvention of policing in Camden, New Jersey](#).

Recently, I listened to Preet Bharara's podcast of former New Jersey Attorney General Anne Milgram's hourlong interview with J. Scott Thompson on the remarkable transformation they both led in Camden.

Camden is a blueprint for the reinvention of policing across the nation — talk about the good news! Thank you so much for raising awareness on the powerful peace work by Thompson, Milgram and the thousands of others in the Camden community and in government and other sectors who made it happen.

NCR demonstrates the extraordinary power of a truly Catholic vision. I love to imagine what will happen when our church begins to adopt the same.

MARY ELLEN SINKIEWICZ

Dorchester, Massachusetts

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts and ideas, reactions and responses to letters@ncronline.org. The editor will collect them, curate them and publish a sampling in Letters to the Editor online or in our print edition.

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