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by NCR Staff

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May 3, 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.

Bishop Barron and Commonweal

I read Massimo Faggioli's essay "Will Trumpism Spare Catholicism?" on the Commonweal website before it was bowdlerized at the behest of Word on Fire lawyers (ncronline.org, [May, 2024](#)). The supposedly controversial paragraph

provided thoughtful analysis based on a careful examination of the current political landscape, and accurately placed Barron on the Catholic Right - observing that intellectual energy in that sector is now coalescing around "Trumpism."

So Barron was slandered? Consider the following:

At the blatantly partisan "National Catholic Prayer Breakfast" on the eve of the 2020 election, Barron gave the keynote address, sharing top billing with Trump and his attorney general, William Barr.

Last spring Barron was commencement speaker at Hillsdale College — whose entanglements with the Trump administration have been exhaustively documented. For example, Hillsdale's president chaired Trump's "1776 Commission" — designed to downplay the significance of slavery and racism in American history.

Barron regularly features Trump operatives and sycophants in his media productions — men like Ben Shapiro, Christopher Rufo, Jim Caviezel and Jordan Peterson. Don't expect to see him with Jennifer Rubin or Heather Cox Richardson.

"Word on Fire" is a lucrative business that allows Barron to retain aggressive legal staff. It's scandalous that he used that power to silence unflattering but fair commentary appearing in an independent Catholic publication.

The Faggioli article should be posted on the internet in its original form by an organization that can afford to fight back, so that Barron's cowardice and dishonesty can be exposed.

HENRY KELLEY
Arlington, Virginia



LGBTQ+ issues not the only issue

I agree completely with Pope Francis' "open heart" approach to transgender people and gender-affirming surgery (ncronline.org, [April 30, 2024](#)). Everyone should be included in the Church, but this has been taken too far.

NCR (to which I have a 3-year print subscription) devotes far too much space to the concerns of a very small minority. I seldom get an issue that doesn't have at least three or four articles about "LGBTQ+" issues. At the same time, it devotes far too little space to the ongoing genocide in Gaza. I have never seen this condemned in NCR's pages. Pope Francis has called for a cease-fire, but has NCR?

I have always liked NCR because it has been supportive of the Holy Father. It should back him up strongly about both the excesses of the LGBTQ+ movement and the unacceptable policies of Netanyahu's right-wing government and our government's unconditional support for them.

SHIRLEY D. STARKE
Valley City, North Dakota

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Open letter on Dignitas Infinita

The signatories of the open letter to Pope Francis clarify many of the issues which Dignitas Infinita raised (ncronline.org, [April 25, 2024](#)). Their initial statement raises the most salient point in that if we are to become a synodal church we must not only listen to our shepherds, the shepherds must also listen to the sheep. The pervasive clericalism of the church, particularly that which is far too common in our domestic church, appears to militate against dialogue.

The signatories speak about the failure of those who composed this teaching to engage with the people they were describing. Hearsay evidence would never hold up in court yet the church accepts the opinions of those whose prejudices dovetail with the authors of the teaching and excludes empirical evidence which the authors wish to ignore if not disparage.

After showing such openness and welcome to all communities, particularly those who have historically been marginalized, the failure to be open to individuals who find themselves in conflict between the physical and mental attributes of their gender identity is shallow and harmful. The concept of listening to one another does not presuppose adoption of the other's views without question. It does presuppose that an open mind, receptive to new ideas or a review of traditional ideas, would become a cornerstone for a relationship based upon dialogue. From that dialogue both parties to the conversation will have learned from one another.

If our ecclesial leaders are not prepared to learn and would rather project an inarguable self-righteousness, then Pope Francis' vision for our church will never evolve. It is time that serious dialogue be engaged so those who want to assert ecclesial authority have a foundation upon which to make a credible stand.

CHARLES A LE GUERN
Granger, Indiana
