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by NCR Staff

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Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, the president of the U.S. bishops' conference surprised some of his fellow bishops at the end of the virtual assembly last week. [He announced the formation](#) of a working group to examine what President-elect Joe Biden's stance on abortion means. [Some bishops are concerned](#) that the posture of the bishops' conference toward Biden could possibly damage future collaboration on common ground.

As one who opposes abortion, there is absolutely no issue on where the church stands on abortion, I assure Archbishop José Gomez. What there is confusion about is where does the church stand on all life. Those children caged because of immigration, those on death row, those abused because of race, the addicted, etc.

President-elect Joe Biden is a Catholic elected to represent all people. He has an obligation to represent all stances not just Catholic ones. Are the bishops that dense and uneducated as not to understand that? Let the bishops tend to church matters of which there are many such as the lives of those living children who have been abused by their own.

EUGENE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina



The U.S. bishops' conference is picking a fight it will lose for many reasons. Most importantly, President-elect Joe Biden is not "supporting" but "allowing" abortion. Freedom of religion means freedom for everyone to practice their religion — or no religion. The U.S. bishops' conference speaks for no one outside their religion. Biden is the president of all the people.

Biden is a Francis Catholic. Reformer Pope Francis will warmly welcome him to the Vatican City. It's doubtful the U.S. bishops can publicly criticize Biden without hearing from Francis and American Catholics will likely rise up against such a move.

The church has lost its ability to lead and does not have the moral authority to demand anything of Biden.

The Biden administration holds the power of the purse and political influence. Were the U.S. bishops' conference foolish enough to act against Biden it's likely they'll feel repercussions. Biden knows the bishops supported President Donald Trump so he has little to lose by holding the bishops at bay. Pray God he does.

MICHAEL J. MCDERMOTT

Tyler, Texas

"Among other things, it creates confusion among the faithful about what the Catholic Church actually teaches on these questions."

I offer the thought that it is the bishops, not the faithful, who are actually confused and whose tunnel vision is harmful to democracy.

A reminder to the bishops: when President John F. Kennedy ran for office, he was pelted with questions and statements about the fear that he would put the United States under the pope. JFK rightly argued that this nation is a democracy that believes in the separation of church and state. As president, he will support the constitution and law of the land as separate from personal religious belief and practice.

A second reminder to the bishops: they did not contest the election of Catholics to Congress nor deny them communion for taking an oath to uphold the constitution which includes a woman's right to choose and protection for the LGBTQ community.

A third reminder to the bishops: they did not contest the appointments of Catholics to the Supreme Court where the justices must uphold the constitution and law of the land which includes a woman's right to choose and protection for the LGBTQ community.

Under these bishops, therefore, no Catholic could ever be eligible for elected or appointed office in the United States.

CHERYLE BARTOLO

Poland, Ohio

Will someone please wake up the bishops to the real world? Reports from their conference show such a lack of leadership. They seem to be living in their own little male world. Are they just administrators setting budgets and appointing committees or are they pastors seriously considering the church in the modern world?

There are problems that get no attention. There is war and the violence that has become a threat to everyday life here in the U.S. as well as a threat to the world and to the planet. Insults, threats, sanctions, development and sale of powerful weapons are not subjects for consideration. Even important new guidance from Pope Francis on this subject is not on their agenda. Do they have a bishops' peace committee?

Then there is public life. At least the bishops are addressing racism. But corruption, lies, greed, secrecy, retaliation, biases and other wrongs have crept into our capitalistic system and individual behavior without a strong moral message from our bishops of parishes. The reason given: this is politics. With a Catholic president-elect we must support our government.

The exception: abortion. Perhaps a discussion on birth control, pregnancy, family life, and other feminine considerations could enlighten this problem and move it to a more productive resolution. But with the clerical celibacy requirement also needing consideration, it is removed from consideration other than right and wrong by a rigid male interpretation.

It's not easy to get into the modern world. We are lucky to have Pope Francis.

SALLY McMILLAN

Iowa City, Iowa

It seems that the bishops might want to review their first-year course in sociology and law. I learned in Sociology 101 that a law is not good law if it is not enforceable. Our national experience has shown us that laws to criminalize abortion are not enforceable.

Remember what happened to prohibition. It was soon repealed, not because the country was pro-alcoholism, but because the prohibition amendment only gave rise to illegal traffickers while doing nothing to stop consumption of alcohol. Prohibition was not enforceable.

Pro-choice recognizes that the government will never be able to eliminate abortion by legislation. By criminalizing abortion, the government will only make it more dangerous, because women who want an abortion will go to doctors or others who will step up to offer it in clandestine and dangerous conditions. Abortion is a moral issue; sometimes we cannot legislate morality.

Pro-choice is not pro-abortion. Few if any persons are truly pro-abortion. Women resort to abortion because their circumstances appear to corner them into giving birth to a child they feel incapable to receive or raise.

What happened to those republicans who were against government control of citizens' lives?

PHYLLIS MORRIS

Clinton, Iowa

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Reading your articles on the U.S. bishops' conference, they provide perhaps the best argument as to why there should be a married clergy. The hierarchy continue to live in an alternate reality with a world view clouded by their sense of self-importance, and lack of engagement with world problems.

The crumbling church is in large part due to this myopic worldview enforced by groupthink rather than being inherent in the realities of the day. As a group, this self-importance has led them to believe that people listen when they preach, when, due to their hypocrisy, the opposite is the case.

If there is confusion among the faithful, it is caused by a church that continues to preach strict adherence to its sexual teachings while at the same time it

looked (looks) the other way at pedophile priests, and allowed a man to advance to the rank of cardinal even though they knew he slept with seminarians. The bishops need to realize that they need to clean their house first.

THOMAS HOVEL

McFarland, Wisconsin

This article totally disgusts me. The bishops are concerned that Joe Biden's stand on abortion will confuse Catholics on church teaching. Really? Have they read what Biden has to say on that issue?

I'm sorry, the faithful are much less confused on that issue and all the other issues that these men, whose heads are in the sand, say is confusing to the faithful. The bishops need to open their minds and do some very deep theological writings. The very fact that Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, an Opus Dei member, was elected president of this group is very indicative that they will never move the church forward. And they wonder why the pews are so empty prior to this pandemic.

Do they not worry about President Donald Trump's handling the immigration issues? Or the pandemic no less?

(Sr.) JEANNE SNYDER, RSM

Ridgefield, Connecticut

Do the members of the executive committee of the U.S. bishops' conference have any clue of how tragi-comical their after-meeting admonition of President-elect Joe Biden truly is?

Are they foolish enough to think that they have a stock of credibility anyway, anyhow sufficient to support their shot? Do they realize their trustworthiness is in the dregs after the cowardice so many of them have displayed on a wide range of issues, such as abuse of power and cover-up, to which the McCarrick report has given voice? Do they know how many people who used to pack the pews feel so

abandoned given the almost nationwide failure to deliver adequate spiritual and pastoral care during the COVID-19 crisis?

How do they consider that their rather superficial, pompous, sorry, and weary public displays of faith compares to Biden's heartfelt description of how God is healing and consoling him and his family in the aftermath of his son Beau's too-soon death? How do they think their plan to establish a "working group" to examine Biden's position on abortion stacks up to Biden's ending of his victory statement by quoting from "On Eagles Wings"? Which is more authentically of God?

Sure, Biden is wrong on abortion. But, c'mon guys, tackle the logs in your own eyes before attempting to purify his soul. And, for goodness sake, please consult with his pastors before being so presumptuous as to judge.

JACKSON EDWARDS

Dade City, Florida

Who do the U.S. bishops think they are? What authority gives them the right to insist that Catholic politicians must enforce Catholic principles on all U.S. citizens whether they are Catholic or not? Haven't they read the Vatican II document on the primacy and freedom of conscience? It applies to both Catholic and non-Catholic citizens.

ED HOFFER

Cincinnati, Ohio

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