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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.

Byrne's defense

Despite its flaws, Bishop Byrne's [defense](#) of Bishop Barron is better than a [cease-and-desist letter](#). Byrne notes Archbishop Broglio's terse acknowledgement of Pope

Francis' Feb. 11 [letter](#) to the American bishops. But he overlooks the fact that the otherwise voluble Barron [has not commented on the papal letter but that his Word on Fire website posted an article that same day](#), "First, Love Locally," which explicitly contradicts the Pope's message.

Barron's "liturgy of democracy" compares Trump's address to the mass. Byrne's rejoinder isn't about checking facts, it's about supporting an understanding of Catholicism that privileges authority for the sake of authority, is infatuated with ritual reminiscent of the cult of the emperor, and neglects the content of the gospel.

Like Barron, Byrne claims he is above politics. He probably thinks Leonard Leo's "National Catholic Prayer Breakfast"- at which both he and Barron have appeared as featured speakers - is non-partisan. (In his [2024 keynoter](#), Byrne entertained the NCPB crowd by belittling Dr. Anthony Fauci.) It would be interesting to get his take on his sister Deirdre's [speech](#) (while garbed in her habit) at the 2020 RNC. It's a tragedy that in a time of crisis for our country and our Church, so many of our bishops aren't up to the job.

HENRY KELLEY
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Barron's tacit support

I have long enjoyed Bishop Barron's apologetical work, and as a teacher myself, I find his speaking style dynamic and engaging. Also, I have no objection to his

animadversions regarding the conduct of democrats he regards as lacking sufficient decorum. His analogizing of the solemnity of a presidential speech to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is interesting and apt; however, his finger wagging "naughty naughty" precluded any admonition of Mr. Trump whose tone, manner, style, and substance were intentionally offensive, insulting, and unbecoming of the occasion. I saw nothing in Barron's remarks that would give me assurance of non-partisanship, and his acceptance of an invitation from an ideologically ensconced MAGA congressman was hardly a matter of chance. I would never call Barron a theocratic bully as I would pseudo-martyrs Strickland and Burke. Rather, Barron seems adroit at tacit displays of contempt for democrats and equally tacit displays of approbation for Trump. I have yet to read of any bishop or priest excoriating the President for his cruel and vindictive style, for his denigration of immigrants, for his clear exploitation of religious groups and ministers as moral cover for his life littered with sin. Oh, wait, I take that back. One bishop — the Bishop of Rome — had the moral courage to renounce Trumpistic theology.

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Barron's faustian gamble

Reading John Grosso's coverage of Bishop Barron's reflection on Trump's congressional address confirmed what I have come to suspect for some time: Barron is first of all a member of the Republican party and that is more basic to his world view than even the gospel (NCR, [March 2, 2025](#)). His evident bias for all things Republican as an ingrained, primary orientation, colors even his interpretation of the gospel. One who sees with the eyes of the gospel would stand independent of politics seeing the good and the failure on both sides of the political debate.

He feels so secure now in his media success that he can boldly advocate for republican positions and disparage democrats. This is unworthy of a clergy person. I would not want to be this man when he is going through the process of death and having to peel away what truly motivated him. When we align the gospel with a

particular political perspective we betray it. He seems to have acquired a sense of personal infallibility with the success of Word on Fire. That is a dangerous place to be.

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