News
Opinion



by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

April 26, 2019
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

NCR readers are welcome to join the conversation and send us a letter to the editor. Below is a sampling of letters received in the month of March 2019. If you want to respond to an article published in NCR, follow the steps listed at the end of this post.

Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese spells out "The good, the bad, and the merciful: Pope Francis after six years." From where I sit in the pew, the line reflecting my own

experience is "Francis appeals to the heart. He complains that 'we have reduced our way of speaking about mystery to rational explanations, but for ordinary people the mystery enters through the heart.' " The whole point is that regarding mystery — trinity, one person/two natures, consecration — there are no rational explanations. Somehow as I understand it, love, a mystery in and of itself in my book, is the answer and that speaks to me of heart.

Regarding his take on women — he has an Italian heritage and grew up in a machismo culture, cringe producing in this granddaughter of a suffragette, but understandable and overshadowed by his vision of the church as a field hospital.

ADELAIDE LOGES

Bothell, Washington

***

When Francis was elected pope, I didn't pay much attention (and I'm a priest). Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI's episcopal nominees had already left me cold. Not as cold and abandoned as I felt in the presence of the schismatic Roman Curia, which has long since abandoned the people of God, but frozen enough to feel that in matters of faith I'd just have to weather through on my own.

No way! I am accompanied by the followers on the way and the myriad martyrs. And it is in this faith that I followed and it is this faith that enabled me to see and to feel a new austral spring sprung in the church.



I began to read papal letters — unusual for me but the followers on the way encouraged me. And soon, in the flights of fancy, I was traveling with Pope Francis hearing his homilies and reading his writings. Now I understand why he asks us to pray for him.

Oh! Papa Chico, we pray for you, how we pray for you — always and everywhere. Now and at the hour of our death. We pray that you be strong in rooting out the cancer that is the Roman Curia, the schismatic Roman Curia, separated from the people of God.

Sock it to them, Papa Chico. God might be Brazilian, but the pope is Argentinian!

(Fr.) TIAGO THORLBY

Recife, Brazil

***

Very good assessment on Pope Francis' accomplishments and imperfections on his papacy as of today. I wonder about the historical record of periods of good performance of the Vatican and for that matter the Catholic Church during the 21 centuries of existence.

A good organization has to reinvent itself from time to time to continue delivering in its objective and mission. That means a relevant and consistency strategy and the governance and structure that supports it.

The Catholic Church should address the sexual problems inside the church and reassess the role of women in the church. And certainly, it needs good senior and junior leadership — a mix of clergy and laity.

JAVIER HERNANDEZ

Washington, D.C.

***

In Michael Sean Winters' opinion piece on Pope Francis, you refer to upper middle class conservatives dominating Catholic's responses to the pope and church. It is definitely not just the upper class but also the middle class and lower middle classes of Catholicism that dominate. Why? So many are fixated on one issue, abortion. During the 2016 election, there were signs in and around my town of 18,000 linking Hillary Clinton to abortion and that was sole reason given for voting Republican. The same was true for the messages coming from many, not all, pulpits on Sundays and often leaflets were put on cars during Mass.

Pope Francis spoke out strongly about not voting on just one issue but to see the candidates as a whole. Cardinal Joseph Bernadin's "consistent ethic of life" treats all of human life and is not limited to the issue of abortion. As long as abortion remains the main issue in Sunday sermons along with gay marriages than other issues such as immigration are rushed over and relegated to third place.

Does anyone really think President Donald Trump is morally and ethically opposed to abortion? The rates of abortion are at an all-time low thanks to contraceptives and access to groups like Planned Parenthood. Let's do the same for refugees, the poor among us and stop being obsessed with issues of sex.

Right now, the church has no moral right to speak about sexual issues until they take concrete steps to expel all priests, bishops and cardinals implicated in any sex abuse cases. The institution needs to clean its own house rapidly before mandating any issues of sexuality. The "nones" and the "elders" are sick of it. Let us concentrate on all of life as Jesus commanded.

MARY JO MURRAY

Tiffin, Ohio

While the work of the Leadership Roundtable in addressing the problems of the Catholic Church is a good step forward ("New report addresses church's 'twin crises' of sex abuse, leadership failure"), I am afraid their recommendations do not go deep enough to fix the crises.

Having spent 12 years in seminaries, 10 years in the priesthood and later being reduced to the lay state, I believe the root problem is not a clerical culture but a clerical caste system that infects our church. This caste system not only separates

the clergy from the laity, but also separates the various levels of clergy from each other.

It is a system built on externals (titles, vestments and rings). It is structured on a hierarchy (a holy rule) grounded on vows of obedience. It is supported by its own legal rules in the Code of Canon Law. It is held together by the various theologies of the church, from moral to sacramental to dogmatic teachings, with their veneer of infallibility.

It is a system that teaches aspiring clerics that they are different ("You are a priest forever."), that they are almost divine (acting "in the person of Christ") and that they must keep themselves separate (celibate). They are steeped in this system throughout their years in the seminary, where their vocation is fed by this caste system.

Unless the church is willing to look deeply into the roots of its clerical caste system, I am afraid that no surface changes will touch the heart of our crises.

WILLIAM CARROLL

West Hartford, Connecticut

***

Is this a joke? These supposedly intelligent, highly educated men have only addressed the symptoms, the results from the major problem. They have not even hinted at dealing with the cause of the problems, which is obviously their prolonged idolatry, and love of their power and money gods gained from their inhumane mandate. Mandatory celibacy is abnormal and inhumane. Celibacy can only be successful when it is voluntary. The accountability proposals have zero hint of any plan for addressing that obvious cause. So, the sin and crimes will continue, until someone faces and ends that real cause.

The excess power and money that has accumulated over the centuries from mandating celibacy onto every single priest, just because he was called by God to become a priest, has made them all lose their minds, so they won't have to even think about their idolatry and rejection of God's laws. Even Christ did not mandate celibacy onto his apostles. If any of them chose such a saintly life, it was absolutely voluntary.

There is only one remedy to end the cause of all the naturally occurring sexual abuse and scandal, from their selfishness and idolatry, and that is to end the mandate of celibacy, making it only willing and voluntary, with zero duress or threats to those holy men, who are not saints, the majority. Yes, it will be a mess and lots of work, organizing, and changes. Obviously, it must be done.

MARY L. GRABSKI

Florence, Wisconsin

***

I suggest that the crisis in the church is deeper. I suggest the above is a symptom of deeper division. Some bishops do not want discipline on money or belief. The problem is abuse of power.

Theodore McCarrick would not have gotten so far but for he brought in too much money. We have heard of money laundering in the Vatican. Pope Benedict XVl resigned under heat. Some bishops and some people do not accept Vatican ll.

We may not like or agree on many things, however there must be a better way to deal with it. Read why some leave or stay. I have not heard of any recent excommunications; people are leaving faster than they can be kicked out. What about Vatican lll?

ROBERT THELEN

Burns, Oregon

Paul Collins has previously implied that he is not convinced by the Cardinal George Pell jury verdict. On Feb. 26, on Australia's ABC Radio's "The World Today" program, he stated, "Now, I of course accept the decision of the court. I simply accept the fact that the court has found him guilty. ... A lot of Catholics still do not accept Cardinal Pell's guilt — and I'm not just talking about conservative Catholics. A lot of people, very well-informed people: they're not persuaded by his guilt."

Given Collins' notorious antipathy to Pell, even his simply intimating in this fashion that he had doubts about the verdict was widely regarded as very much to his credit.

In his NCR commentary he has, however, shifted into lock-step with the left. Regarding the imminent Pell appeal, he does acknowledge that "Some Catholics, among them progressives, think the appeal is based on strong grounds and that Pell will be found innocent"; however, now he endorses the jury verdict and vilifies the cardinal: "Pell seems to have felt himself beyond ordinary scrutiny, that somehow the civil law didn't apply to him. If anything, Pell's conviction makes it absolutely clear that the church is subject to the civil law and that clerical impunity will not be tolerated."

I do not believe that Collins has become convinced since Feb. 26 that the jury verdict was justifiable given the evidence which was presented. I have no doubt that he still shares with every person with the remotest interest in truth and even the feeblest capacity for intellectual objectivity who has surveyed the evidence, the key elements of which have been widely publicized, that Pell cannot conceivably have done as alleged. So what does Collins' "evolved" public stance as disported in his article say about his integrity?

COLIN JORY

Narrabundah, Australia

***

No doubt, nowadays are very trying times for the mission of the church. The latter ought to be the only concern for the church, rather than image or reputation. The only image that the church ought to be seriously concerned about is whether it has faithfully demonstrated to the world the image of Jesus Christ. Isn't that the singular raison d'etre of our existence as a church? St. Paul's heartfelt words to the church of Corinth saying, "always, we carry with us in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our body" would accurately put all these in proper perspective why and where the church is at this moment of history.

The unfolding drama or spectacle regarding Cardinal George Pell, and many others — accusations, denials, convictions, prison sentences — ought to be, more importantly, seen and understood in this light. We plead for these beleaguered

leaders not to lose this very light: if guilty, humbly, with heart contrite, receive the wage of sin conscious of God's unconditional mercy; if not guilty, humbly embrace the public condemnation and humiliation as the suffering servant of God did in Isaiah 53 — "ill-treated and afflicted he never opened his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter-house."

I am convinced that only through either of these attitudes can the Mission of Church defy the sting of public scandals and continue to shine like "a lamp on a lamp-stand" and "a salt for the earth."

(Fr.) ENNO DANGO, CP

Chicago, Illinois

It is time, not to reckon with unbelief, but rather to confront the human capacity, need and practice for openness, wonder and awe. The messages of Christ's love, compassion and option for the poor, suffering, voiceless and confined are founded, not upon a unique mystical or sectarian revelation. They are in continuity with and a progression of humanity and its best thinkers, philosophers and teachers, with civilization.

Jesus is of that tradition, usurped and in ways violated by institutional self-interest. To re-read Pope Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* is to see how cunningly God's love of creation and Jesus' preoccupation with the world can be rewritten into a script for institutional domination. It is ideology that defiles belief. It should not be surprising when this kind of belief is rejected.

If the church had the faith to reckon with humanity as Jesus did and does and with creation, as the parent did and does, the capacity for belief will begin to emerge again. The capacity for belief is within the fundamental makeup of the human person. It can and has been abused in many dimensions that might be termed as ideology whether social, political or religious. Traditional Roman Catholicism is dominated by ideology. That is what is rejected. It is the contemporary mission of Jesus in church to reject ideology and restore not so much belief but rather its primordial capacity.

DENNIS MACDONALD

Bedford, Nova Scotia

***

So the Vatican is hosting a conference on "The Culture of Unbelief." I hope this conference includes a workshop entitled, "How corruption and hypocrisy encourages millions to mock faith."

Many of my acquaintances have reached the conclusion that all religion is a hoax perpetrated on the weak-minded and vulnerable. The Catholic hierarchy's track record makes it difficult to dispute that view.

Even now, the men of the hierarchy seem to be focused on preserving their hierarchy with little or no real change, while mouthing a few mild critiques of clerical culture. The most charitable view of their behavior would be that they genuinely believe they are the indispensable guardians of the faith, and have already forgiven themselves for their stunning shortcomings.

Up to this point, there is little or no evidence that they are capable of grasping the magnitude of their failure. For that reason, they are also incapable of doing anything meaningful to renew our church and remake it into something that attracts rather than repels those who were not born into it.

JOHN STARK

Bellingham, Washington

After reading Michael Sean Winters' column on the left's anti-Semitism, I feel I must respond. As a 73-year-old practicing Catholic who is very troubled by the treatment of Palestinians in Israel, you make no mention of those American Jews who support the Israel government's treatment of Palestinians. In fact, I don't remember you ever mentioning Palestinians in any of your recent columns.

I have given support to NCR and read your columns every day. How about some mention of the good work that Jewish Voice for Peace and Sabeel are doing to improve the treatment of Palestinians? Criticizing the actions of the Israel government is not anti-Semitism.

LAURA MONIN

Moraga, California

***

This article was sent to me by a very close friend of mine, a Catholic priest.

I am not going to dignify it by bothering to give it any more time of day than I already have. Such an article may explain why I am not a subscriber to the NCR. Be assured, in case you are beginning to make assumptions, nobody who knows me will consider me to be closed-minded or unfair. They also know that I do not have time to entertain nonsense, even if it uses Vatican II to sound solid.

I wish the individual who wrote this article would not continue with such specious and seductive arguments. This person appears to be sincere but certainly strikes me as confused, possibly because of a deep-seated "God's Chosen People" syndrome, who is unable to distinguish between the State of Israel and Jews, hundreds of thousands of whom, perhaps millions, denounce AIPAC and Israel's policies in Palestine, where I recently visited.

Rep. Ilhan Omar may be anti-Semitic but she has not shown it in anything that I have heard her say. Despite her 2012 "Israel has hypnotized the world" Tweet, and her apology for it under duress, I have no reason to believe for a moment that Omar is anti-Semitic.

I consider myself "distinctly Catholic." I am also a former Jesuit who believes he is still very much Ignatian in his spirit of discernment and in his seeking to practice contemplation in action.

DESMOND SEQUEIRA

St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

This article "From Laborem Exercens to AOC: why I'm a Catholic Democratic Socialist " caught my attention and reminded me of other long-forgotten statements in a similar vein from 80 or 90 years ago. Only they would have stated why I'm a National Socialist and been written in German or Italian. They would have identified themselves as "Catholic" too since their authors had been baptized as Catholics.

They would also have made further promises of overturning a corrupt and failing political system. They might not have dwelt on their further plans to dispose of unproductive citizens in the gas chambers any more than the current Democratic Socialists dwell on disposing of the socially unproductive aged by euthanasia or of unwanted babies by abortion or by allowing them to die in the delivery room from neglect.

But even if the frenzy whipped up by AOC among Democrats differs slightly from Hitler or Mussolini, the message is basically the same. I assume Alex Mikulich is too young to remember them. It makes him appear too naive to appreciate AOC.

WILLIAM T. KEANE

Leesburg, Florida

***

If the Democratic Socialists would read the Bible carefully, they would see that Jesus taught us how to live, not how to organize, protest, or reform government to fit their ideas of "just and fair." That is not the role of government; government exists to protect the freedom to make our own choices.

Jesus didn't say we are to force anyone to feed the poor or care for the sick, just as God doesn't force us to follow the Ten Commandments. In fact, Jesus said to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," leaving each of us to decide how to render God's laws according to our God-given gifts and talents.

Democratic Socialists are trying to force by legislation everyone into following Jesus' example, something that even God does not do. We are to be the light of the world and lead by example, not to be the policemen of Christianity. I am astounded that you would print such nonsense in a Catholic publication by people who claim to advocate for the poor and disadvantaged by telling everyone else to sacrifice, while they will unctuously tell you how you must do it or else.

GAYLE WITTMANN

Harmony, Pennsylvania

I want Sarah Mac Donald to know how much I appreciate her article on climate change action in Ireland. I taught high school in the U.S. for 36 years. The beauty of students gathering to move politicians and others to see the seriousness of climate change, is rewarding and a means to give us all hope to see that there are solutions.

Congratulations to the teachers, parents and Lorna Gold. I hope to hear about actions taken by the Irish politicians (and all politicians throughout the world) to resist climate change.

TONY FADALE

Torrance, California

Advertisement

In his piece, "Bishops must look within their own culture," Tom Roberts rightly states: "Taking an unblinking look at their own culture and their role in the perpetuation of this awful chapter in church history will be the most difficult and most profound action the bishops can take."

But let's not forget that we laity also have an important role in helping the church and the bishops move to a better and healthier future. I was reminded of this after reading *Clericalism: The Death of Priesthood* by George B. Wilson, S.J., a book that was written 10 years ago!

Too often many of us (myself included) have remained silent in the face of clerical arrogance, lousy homilies, unjust treatment of lay church employees, and bishops who have no desire to "smell like their sheep."

Baptism is the same call to holiness and servant leadership for all of us, regardless of what other sacraments we might receive. I need to add my voice and my actions to those of NCR and other faithful who are responding to the call to discipleship in these challenging times.

JIM PURCELL

Los Gatos, California

[Jim Purcell is NCR board chair.]

***

I was glad that Tom Roberts reminded us of Mark Slatter's earlier column on clerical identity crisis"where he names the culture of bishops' as something other than clerical culture, "Hierarchical culture is the gold carrot for those predisposed to its allurements." Slatter is right to give that culture another title because in fact that culture of the hierarchy is even more problematic and unknown than clerical culture. And, just as clericalism is different from a culture that promotes servant priests, similarly hierarchicalism is different from the culture that promotes servant bishops.

What most priests and bishops know well is that the formative pathways for future bishops are generally speaking different from those for average priests. Early on, future bishops are sent to and examined in Rome in a variety of ways and offered hierarchal "allurements" that most priests do not receive.

Hierarchalism is that culture precisely at the center of the more recent sexual abuse scandal. Just as clericalism gave us the scandals from 2002, hierarchicalism gave us the more recent scandal: witness Pell, McCarrick, Finn, Barbarin, the Chilean bishops, Franco Mulakkal (the Indian bishop accused of raping the religious women), etc. The hierarchical culture has greater power and greater networking capabilities than clerical culture. We need then to distinguish the two, not because clericalism is not pernicious, it is, but because we have to understand better the viciousness of the culture more isolated and protected than the clergy's and certainly more complex, insidious, and driven than we know or acknowledge.

(Fr.) JAMES F. KEENAN, S.J.

Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

I was floored by the article entitled "Pope: God is purifying the church with unbearable pain of abuse scandal" where Cindy Wooden quotes Pope Francis as blaming the devil for the abuse scandal and

saying God is working "to restore the beauty of his bride, surprised in flagrant adultery."

I find this language unbelievably obtuse and archaic. "Flagrant adultery" minimizes the extent of the outrage committed by males who happen to be church leaders who have raped children and those even higher in the system who covered it all up.

For me, as a woman, this is yet another example of the sexism deeply ingrained in the church and how out of touch Vatican language can be.

GRAINNE NORTON

Kensington, New South Wales, Australia

***

One announcement at the end of the summit was significant: the abolition of the pontifical secret over clergy sexual abuse of children. This imposition of the church's top-secret classification over clergy sexual abuse has its origins only 100 years ago with Pope Pius XI's instruction, *Crimen Sollicitationis*, and was expanded by Pope Paul VI's instruction *Secreta Continere* of 1974.

The recent announcement means that the church will return to some 1,500 years of its own tradition of true cooperation with the civil authorities in punishing the crime of the sexual abuse of children. Any argument about repressive regimes is easily fixed with dispensations. Changing canon law in this way will not change the culture of cover up overnight, but as Cardinal Francis George correctly said in a 2003 article, law and culture cannot be separated, and a culture will never disappear while there is a law in place which embodies it.

The pontifical secret might have been a reflection of the culture of cover-up at the time, but its very existence ensured that it would be internalized by bishops. There are other aspects of canon law relating to child sexual abuse which have still not been dealt with, such as a truly independent judicial system, involvement of lay people and the bias towards priest protection in the disciplinary system that still need reformed. The abolition of the pontifical secret is at least a start.

KIERAN TAPSELL

Stanwell Park, North South Wales, Australia

***

As I watched the summit called by Pope Francis, which addressed childhood sexual abuse, it brought to mind two scriptural passages: John 11:35 states "Jesus wept." Luke 19:41 states: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it."

Today, I believe that Jesus wept and is still weeping for:

The victims and the survivors of childhood sexual abuse. These people lost their innocence and it has profoundly impacted them and their families. It has also contributed to multiple churches being closed as people have given up on their faith.

The perpetrators, as well as some in the church hierarchy who have betrayed the church by not notifying the laity that there were problems thereby putting vast numbers of innocent victims at risk.

The priesthood. There are lots of good and holy men in the priesthood who work hard in addressing the needs of their parishioners entrusted to them. These men should not be painted with the same broad brush of the perpetrators. This horror probably has discouraged other young men from pursuing the discernment process to the priesthood.

We must always pray for the innocent victims whose lives were destroyed and we must address their physical and emotional issues. Therefore, I suggest a weekly mass dedicated to these victims/survivors in every church in every diocese to show them that the laity, as well as the universal church, truly care for them.

JAMES A. PITASSI, JR.

Johnston, Rhode Island

I was very pleased to read the article titled "Old guard looks to new generation of voices on nuclear disarmament." I had just finished Frank Fromherz book *A Disarming Spirit*, a powerful and a well-researched book about Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen, a truly prophetic Catholic voice among the old guard who proclaimed the immorality of nuclear weapons. He saw nuclear weapons as immoral not only because of their destructive capability, but also because they protected power and privilege, and used resources and creativity needed for the good of all.

Hunthausen's story is compelling and I hope young people who believe that nuclear disarmament is a moral imperative become familiar with his it. What I found most heartening in the article was not the youthfulness of the new guard but their gender — Kelsey Davenport, Carmen MacDougall, and Bridget Rickard.

Our church and our world are in such desperate need of leaders who focus on the good of all. This is a time when women around the globe are claiming their rightful role as their brothers' equals. If young women say "no" to nuclear weapons, I believe their mothers and grandmothers will quickly follow, as will in time, their brothers, fathers and grandfathers until "me too" resounds around the globe.

MARILYN VEOMETT

Portland, Oregon

The chancellor of the Charlotte diocese has been credibly accused of improper behavior. He has resigned. Bishop Peter Jugis is still refusing to reveal names of those previously accused. This is supposed to be healing? People are done with this stuff.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina

I am submitting my opinion for "The self-revelation that makes us new again" by Joan Chittister.

Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister does not tell us that St. Benedict's rules were designed to meet the need of monks "in a community environment: namely, to establish due order, to foster an honest understanding of the relational nature of human beings, and to provide a spiritual father to support and strengthen the individual's ascetic effort and the spiritual growth that is required for the fulfillment of the human vocation."

Therefore, what she fails to address are the needs of people living without the guidance to develop an understanding of the relational nature of being human. She ignores the need to hide wounds: the child curled inside himself after being bullied, the shame people suffer because the two-year college is their future, the burning

tears because a car is a home, the humiliation because I'm not wearing Ugg shoes. She clearly doesn't understand the need to define one's appearance in order to fit into the design of things.

We don't live in comfortable monastic settings where we wear the same clothing and shoes; or go to the commissary when we need a toothbrush; where it is comfortable to remove the outer shell of emptiness; where "masks" are not needed to hide secret sins. Our psychologists tell us that the truth will set us free but first it will hurt like hell, so we had better make sure we know what we substitute for the appearances we are shedding.

Chittister tells us that our secret sins will enslave us to our secret selves but she fails to tell us where will we find the strength required to fulfill our human vocation. Perhaps it is our secret sins that will make our secret selves better persons, where we find a way to prosper. Her conclusion preaches to the monastic choir.

However, what rule might Benedict write for us who live where "masks" are needed to help us build a crust of protection for safety and growth; where humility is not a dish served for dinner?

LEONARDO CRUOGLIO

Tinton Falls, New Jersey

Pope Francis' visit to Morocco reminds Americans of the Trump ban on mostly Muslim countries at U.S. borders. It is also a reminder that barriers/walls are not only unjust, but inhumane treatment of migrants who flee violence, crime, and poverty in their homeland. Why else leave one's home?

To vilify those who seek safe haven across borders betrays one's prejudice and false sense of "national security" as if all migrants are guilty of criminal behavior. The Gospel calls us to practice mercy and compassion. Sadly, this administration does not honor the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that assures migrants safe passage to safety and security in another land.

(Sr.) LENORE NAVARRO DOWLING, IHM

Los Angeles, California

Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese's article offered an overall inaccurate, insulting, and misleading portrait on the theme of reform in U.S. seminaries. lt was a disappointment coming from the well-known, prolific Jesuit writer and author.

His misleading indictment of bishops, faculty and the quality of today's seminarians reveals a lack of serious research in the initiatives for reform and updating the process of formation taken since Vatican ll. Pope St. John Paul ll's seminal document *Paslores dabo vobis*, the development of his theology of the body and its implications for celibate chastity, the Dallas Charter, the ongoing attention to reform reflected in the successive editions of the U.S. bishops' Program of Priestly Formation, and the recent *Ratio Fundamentalis* represent just select highlights of such initiatives. His inflammatory rhetoric is outrageous. "lt is tempting to suggest blowing up the seminaries. ... lf seminarians cannot function on a university campus, they will not be able to function in a parish. lf that is all it took, reforming our seminaries would be easy."

Since 1988, I have had the privilege to serve full-time on two major seminary faculties. I have served as a rector since 2009. I serve on both Catholic and ecumenical national boards who share a common interest in the formation of holy, healthy and happy priests and ministers. Do our seminaries need reform? They certainly do! This rector is grateful to the current prompting of the Holy Spirit and the vision and episcopal leadership of Pope Francis, our bishops, our dedicated faculties of priests, religious, lay women and men, and most especially, our seminarians.

Today's seminarian is not the problem. Today's seminary community, very much a demographic reflection of our immigrant church, under the movement of the Holy Spirit, offers the path of purification, healing and hope through personal encounter with Jesus Christ in his body, the church.

(Msgr.) PETER I. VACCARI

Yonkers, New York

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.

We cannot publish everything. We will do our best to represent the full range of letters received. Here are the rules:

- Letters to the editor should be submitted to letters@ncronline.org.
- Letters to the editor should be limited to 250 words.
- Letters must include your name, street address, city, state and zip code. We will publish your name and city, state, but not your full address.
- If the letter refers to a specific article published at ncronline.org, please send in the headline or the link of the article.
- Please include a daytime telephone number where we can reach you. We will not publish your phone number. It may be used for verification.
- We can't guarantee publication of all letters, but you can be assured that your submission will receive careful consideration.
- Published letters may be edited for length and style.

This story appears in the **Your thoughts** feature series. View the full series.