Opinion



by NCR Staff

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"You will know that we are Christians by our love, but you will know that we are Catholics by our fights," writes Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese in a recent column about Pope Francis' June 29 apostolic letter, *Desiderio Desideravi*, decrying the division over the Eucharist and describing the sacrament as one of unity. Following are NCR reader responses to this column that have been edited for length and clarity.

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How sad it is, that the focus of the Eucharist for the Catholic Mass is that little wafer. The church wants us to recognize Jesus in that wafer, but yet does not respect the full humanity of LGBTQ persons. The following from John 14: 15-17, says this:

> If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

The "Spirit of truth"? Is it that little wafer?

**EILEEN CIEZKI**

**Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

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As a lay Catholic, I disagree that *Desiderio Desideravi* is "of little interest to the vast majority of Catholics." All churches that practice traditional liturgical worship, in whatever form, have lost millions of faithful to churches that do not.

We should all be alarmed that many millions of Catholics around the world are content to worship at churches that offer no real liturgy to speak of, where worship is a concert followed by a lecture. All churches that not have not hollowed out Christian worship need to make their faithful understand why liturgy matters. *Desiderio Desideravi* is a welcome contribution to that sacred effort.

**JEFFREY JONES**

**Hamburg, New York**

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What I have garnered from the writings of Pope Francis is that he is not so much ambiguous, but he encourages us to read between the lines. Unfortunately, it means "every fool plucks the feather for his own cap."

I concur with Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese that we need a definitive letter on the Eucharist (*Novus Ordo*) from Pope Francis, although he might choose a like-minded theologian to help, or actually write it. Most Catholics still think in black or white; it is or it isn't; new rite or old. Gray, appeasement, compromise will not work.

**SALLY MEYERS**

**Rancho Cucamonga, California**

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I just read Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese's column on Pope Francis. I'm Catholic schooled in pre-Second Vatican Council and in Catholic high school when it began. Our Sisters of Mercy and teachers were excited about what was come. So were my parents and I.

When the 1977 Mass came out, in the language I spoke, I was elated. Shortly after, I had an experience that brought me to tears. At a Mass in the church I was baptized in, I cried. All my education culminated the moment I said, "Lord I am not worthy, only say the word and I will be healed." I was/am unworthy, but Jesus will heal me. All the years before, I just "attended" Mass for the Eucharist. But then I began to really pray the Mass, until we went backward in 2011. Why? Vatican II was to "open our doors and windows." It did!

We were told this 2011 version was from the 1500s? Why? Having studied our church history, that era was the worst time for our church. I've prayed since to return to the people's "vernacular." The Apostles didn't speak in high Greek or Latin, nor should we. We need to respect the vision of Vatican II.

**KATHLEEN LO PINTO VIGNOLINI**

**Long Branch, New Jersey**

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Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese quotes Pope Francis saying "The non-acceptance of the liturgical reform distracts us from the obligation of finding responses to the question that I come back to repeating: how can we grow in our capacity to live in full the liturgical action? How do we continue to let ourselves be amazed at what happens in the celebration under our very eyes? We are in need of a serious and dynamic liturgical formation."

Reese concludes that "we need another letter, one that helps the average Catholic understand and participate in the Eucharist." In answer to that need, I highly recommend *reading* *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives* by Mark Searle. I cannot do justice in describing how wonderfully it explains in lay person terms the dynamics and goals of liturgy and Eucharist.

**PEGGY HEBERT**

**Salina, Kansas**

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My opinion on who should receive the Eucharist is the church has driven many away by not letting them receive the Eucharist. If the intent of Jesus was to drive people away then I've missed that part. He allowed Judas to receive the bread and wine when he initiated the Eucharist. Three Gospels say that all received it. When Paul wrote about it, he was speaking about people taking it for the wrong reasons, not because they were sinners. Show me a Christian that doesn't sin.

**RANDY LANE**

**Orange, Texas**

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My experiences with the differences with communion under the Tridentine Rite until the Second Vatican Council and that of today is profound. Most of our church population cannot recall the earlier, now named the Extraordinary Rite, since as our population ages we lose our recollections of the experiences of our youth.

However, as an altar boy under the Tridentine Rite, I had the experience ingrained in me and I have many memories of that time. In addition to family conversations about the church and the liturgy, as well as discussions of our priests, ideas emerged which were, at times, critical of what the church expected of the faithful.

Communion today is very much a community activity which, unlike the earlier experience except for Easter and Christmas, was the exception not the rule in those preconciliar days. The church's relaxation of arcane rules and the far more welcoming nature of the liturgy, the vernacular rather than Latin for example, has promoted church participation by many more of the faithful. The changes have made the Eucharist a participation activity rather than one for spectators.

That participatory nature of today's Eucharist is as likely as not the reason for the growth in attendance which the church experienced over the past 50 years. Unfortunately, the loss of our church leaders' credibility, the result in part from the abuse scandal as well as the political posturing of some prelates, had diminished the weekly census. Should some bishops resort to reintroducing barriers to communion, in some ways similar to those which were associated with the Tridentine Mass, then the pews will become more emptied since participation will be seen to have been curtailed. That will become a formula for a diminished church, not the expansive and inclusive model favored by Pope Francis.

**CHARLES A. LE GUERN**

**Granger, Indiana**

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