Opinion
Letters to the Editor

by NCR Staff

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March 3, 2023
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Announcing our special series looking at 10 years with Pope Francis, NCR CEO/publisher Joe Ferullo says that Francis is redefining the spirit of Vatican II, and seems to understand the church is once again at a hinge point in its long history. Following are NCR reader responses to this commentary. The letters have been edited for length and clarity.

When NCR CEO/publisher Joe Ferullo poses the stark question, "Should (the church) open the door again or lock it down even more?" he acknowledges the portentous divide before us.

Somehow it seems the divides roiling society-at-large have become entrenched in the church as well. Will the way forward for the faithful be an unholy extension of secular rifts? Or does Jesus' life and teachings suggest a far saner, though challenging, alternative? If we prefer the latter, each of us must insist on it and model it — come what may.

R. JAY ALLAIN
Orleans, Massachusetts



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I just finished reading Ferullo's article in NCR, and I am absolutely thrilled because of his words. I pray every single day that our God will grant good Pope Francis a long and healthy life, so that he can guide us closer in our faith, and in our church structure and spirituality closer to what Jesus actually was doing when he was here fully human.

Vatican II and Pope John XXIII were like a blood transfusion for me and taught me that my God was not a punishing, angry God, but a gentle, loving, guiding, caring, God. And Pope Francis now — at long last — is following in those footsteps. I am exceedingly grateful. And I remain very grateful to NCR for continuing to publish articles like this.

MARY WUDTKE
Chicago, Illinois

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Sharing the ethnic ancestry described by Ferullo, I found much in common with his descriptions of the honor my family felt toward Pope John XXIII as well as toward President John F. Kennedy. In fact, many of the same feelings of hope regarding the Second Vatican Council pervaded my ethnic neighborhood and, of course, our Italian national parish.

The intervening years since the pontificate of Paul VI to the current pontificate of Pope Francis saw, from my perspective, an attempt to reverse the trajectory of the

council and return to earlier times when priests were seen less as servants of the faithful and more as leaders. I recall the fealty which my grandmother, in particular, felt toward our priests and her reticence to criticize them regardless of their personal failings or mistakes.

We need to look at the changes in our society that transpired during the 60 years since the council. Much of the reaction of the faithful to the church leadership, and the leadership in turn toward the faithful, seems to mirror how our population regards our representatives and our government. The same cynicism that pervades our examination of the missteps of our government also is reflected, by the same people, toward the governance of our church.

Ironically, in my view, the majority of those who pine for the preconcilar days are not old enough to know what our church was like before the council. They seem fear an openness toward all people and seem to want to become again what they perceive to have been an exclusive club. This, unfortunately, seems to mirror their political posturing. Too many prelates also seem to encourage that exclusivity and appear to want a smaller but orthodox church wherein they define orthodoxy.

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