Opinion
Letters to the Editor



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.

Mass addendums

Reese's article on the abandoned 1998 ICEL translation was an eye opener for me who, at the time of the controversy, was just becoming accustomed to the title of

"lapsed Catholic" and would remain in that status for another 15 years while following the call to be an independent voice for clergy abuse victims (ncronline.org, Feb. 16, 2024). As such, it does not surprise me to hear that Ratzinger, who was then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is to blame for throwing a wrench into the dedicated work of the aforementioned translators, liturgical scholars and poets that created the 1998 masterpiece.

Like Reese, I join clergy and those people in the pew who feel that it should be revisited with minimal changes to the original. For instance, since women make up half of the church, some of us find it demeaning to recite these words in the Credo, "For us men and our salvation." How about simply, "For us and our salvation"? As well, in the Our Father, many of us like the suggestion of changing "lead us not into temptation" to simply "shield us from temptation," because we know a loving Father would never lead us to our own spiritual destruction. I am sure other folks have addendums of their own too and I would love to hear them as time goes on.

NANCY MCGUNAGLE
Kalispell, Montana



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Worth it

I agree with Reese in his call for a revised missal (ncronline.org, Feb. 16, 2024). It would be inconvenient to again go through a new missal publication, but it would be worth it in terms of our being able to understand our prayer and participation.

Sometimes I stand at the altar and say one of the current prayers, and then ask myself, "What did I just say?" Most of the prayers are simply one long sentence made up of subordinate clauses. We don't speak that way to each other. Why speak to God in that way? With the former Sacramentary, I would usually pray the alternate opening prayer on Sundays because it simply made more sense to me. I wish our regular prayers would make more sense, rather than slavishly following some Latin pattern.

TOM ZELINSKI
Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin

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Hypocrites

Phyllis Zagano's commentary "Trump's language of evil" is on target (ncronline.org, Feb. 20, 2024). One sentence needs clarification, however: "Of course, the bishops genuinely do respect all human life but as a body they seem to be increasingly joined to Trumpian policies, and, by implication, to Trumpian rhetoric." Who are these church leaders who follow Trump and respect human life? Bishops who are so obsessed with outlawing abortion that they will turn a blind eye to the bigotry and criminality of the Trump cult can call themselves "pro-life." We should call them hypocrites.

HENRY KELLEY
Arlington, Virginia

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Rest in peace

Once upon a time no one could be buried in a Catholic cemetery unless the local pastor issued a form which verified that the deceased deserved to be buried in consecrated ground (ncronline.org, Feb. 19, 2024). Outstanding sinners were denied a requiem Mass. Sadly this harsh treatment of "public" sinners continues. On occasion our church forgets that God loves us all, and we should do the same.

JAMES SUGRUE
Yonkers, New York

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A relevant message

Michael Wright's occasional pieces about the threats to the earth and Pope Francis' calls to awaken us to the menace are on point (ncronline.org, Feb. 13, 2024). Here are some thoughts about the disregard in most of our assemblies for the need for responses to the climate crisis.

The Roman Lectionary can be updated to reflect a world that we, not God, are making uninhabitable. For every shout of wonder in scripture we can find forebodings of desolation. Chapter 24 of Isaiah reveals such an unwelcome place. The apocalyptic books mention extraordinary thousand-year events that become more common. At the same time, the telescopes show us a universe in which incredibly distant stars are much more likely to go on spinning and firing without a care for what happens to us, than they are to shake and fall before the Lord.

Homilies can catch the attention of listeners if occasionally they stretch the literal direction of the text toward a more relevant message for today. Once I asked myself whether the treasure in the field was not the wealth buried beneath the surface but the field itself. This and many other extensions of liturgy texts became for me a series of homilies titled "The Land Itself Is the Treasure." Since I am not ordained to preach, I wrote my words to prove that such reflections could satisfy the spirit of our common prayer and bring us together around the cause.

PAUL SCHLACHTER
Miami, Florida