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.

SNAP witness vital

I have been much enjoying your pieces on the conclave, and Michael Sean Winters' in particular. But he is wrong to criticise SNAP for publicising their findings, and to

say that "At a moment such as this, unless they have a smoking gun, they should let the cardinals do their work" (NCR, May 6, 2025). At a moment such as this, they should speak out, whether or not they have a smoking gun, in order to better enable the Cardinals to do their work. The danger is not that the conclave takes abuse too seriously; it's that they don't take it seriously enough. There are a lot of Cardinals there who will not have been exposed to the level of expertise that you have in the U.S. of the extensive and long-term consequences of child abuse — it poisons the wells of salvation — and they need to know that "pipe down, you little people, you're speaking out of turn" (as we say in Britain) is not the answer, but is itself the problem.

SARAH PARVIS
Edinburgh, Scotland

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Barron and Trump

It is scandalous to read Bishop Robert Barron's obsequious prayer as he is named to the "religious liberty commission" and seen in the Rose Garden photo-op (NCR, May 3, 2025).

President Trump has posted a photo in poor taste that implicitly mocks the pope, and he refuses to obey the legitimate order of the Supreme Court to facilitate the release from the Salvadorian prison of Abrego Garcia.

Surely, religious celebrity is a cherished value and we need to have an interreligious approach and Catholic social teaching has a great deal to lend to this discussion.

However, when a president flaunts this buffoonery at this moment in the Catholic Church and in the face of his questionably legal deportations and insulting vocabulary towards immigrants, there is no place for a Catholic bishop to lend a smiling benediction.

Bishop Barron, don't be such a Patsy! Issue a strong statement about why you will not participate in this commission until these flights are ruled on by the Supreme Court and the Abrego Garcia is returned.

That would be the "religious liberty" that we expect you to morally represent.

DAVE PASINKSKI
Fayetteville, New York

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Trump seeks attention

I've been thinking about the Pope Trump picture (NCR, May 4, 2025). What could be the positive outcome of such a post, even for Trump himself?

I don't like to answer questions about "why" someone does something. I am often wrong about "why" even I do anything — at least partially wrong. There are usually multiple reasons people do what they do, some of them hidden.

That being said, this occurs to me: most people want other people to think well of them or not at all. But perhaps Trump simply wants people to think of him, whether well or ill, as long as he is on our minds. All. The. Time. And with all the attention going to Rome, this photo brings the focus back to him. Journalists are even talking about it with the Cardinals! It's in every major newspaper in the world!

Negative press is better than no press. Negative polls are better than no polls. The more havoc, the more damage, the more lives are upended by actions taken, the more attention — for good or ill. It doesn't matter which.

He understands the media as a beast that must be fed 24/7. And he does a good job of finding food for the beast. Most frightening is that he is now synonymous with the USA. Perhaps doing good or evil will not matter for the country, as long as we're the center of the universe.

PAIGE BYRNE SHORTAL
Union, Missouri

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'America Week'

We should all thank Brian Fraga for his excellent reporting on the rich conservative Catholics who were in Rome to wine and dine cardinals (NCR, May 5, 2025). It seems like some American Catholics need serious preaching about the fact that donating to Catholic charities should not be a transactional relationship. While I'm not surprised that wealthy conservatives believe everything has a price, even the papacy, I am still angered and sickened by it.

A politician I knew once told me his philosophy on dealing with lobbyists. He said, "If you can't eat their steaks, drink their whiskey, and still tell them to go to hell, you don't belong in this business." I suppose cardinals must have the same constitution. I'm happy the cardinals ran up the tab on some rich guys and still listened to the Holy Spirit.

TIM BARCHAK
Cochiti Lake, New Mexico

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