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.

Synodality key to women's diaconate

In "Will Pope Leo XIV make the call on women deacons?" Phyllis Zagano eloquently makes the case that the issue of women deacons in the Church needs to be

addressed (NCR, May 13, 2025). Pope Francis desired to "invite every individual in the Church to 'walk together' and move forward, even if that means agreeing to disagree or simply listening or being present". Synod comes from the Greek 'together', so what more appropriate way for Pope Leo XIV to commence his papacy and honor the legacy of Francis than to call for a synod to bring Catholics together to discuss the future role of women in the Church. Some of us believe that women deserve a larger role in the Church and others disagree. Regardless of your viewpoint, let us begin with a dialogue of respect and move forward together to shape the Church of the new millennium.

KEVIN LOUGHLIN
Edgartown, Massachusetts

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Premature acclaim harmful

As a long-time leader of DignityUSA, the world’s oldest organization working for justice, equality, and full inclusion of LGBTQ+ Catholics in our church and society, I am deeply troubled by the headline of your recent article on the appointment of Thomas Hennen to head the Diocese of Baker, Oregon (NCR, July 11, 2025). I am concerned that false hope may be sparked by naming him a "champion" of "LGBT+ inclusion." At best, his record seems mixed. His resume includes "working with" Courage, which promotes celibacy as the only morally legitimate option for Lesbian and Gay people, a position rejected in good conscience by the vast majority of our community, as well as family, friends and many ministers. I appreciate that Bishop-

Elect Hennen acknowledged that listening to the experience of transgender and gay people and their families helped the diocesan commission he was part of craft a policy that included a call for deep pastoral listening and a case-by-case approach in addressing the needs of Queer people. We do not yet have information on how that relatively new policy has been implemented.

We need to give Hennen time to settle into his role as leader of a diocese before setting expectations that may or may not reflect his beliefs, leadership style and actions. I hope and pray he will model a deep commitment to not only welcoming but also affirming and celebrating each individual he shepherds. However, LGBTQ+ Catholics and our families have been subjected to cycles of hopes being raised and dashed by too many church leaders. This is often more damaging than outright rejection.

The LGBTQ+ Catholic Community of the Baker, Oregon Diocese, and every other place, deserves a church that honors our identities, our spiritual journeys, our gifts and our struggles. But, NCR, please refrain from proclaiming a truth not yet proven.

MARIANNE DUDDY-BURKE
Executive Director, DignityUSA
Malden, Massachusetts

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USCCB silence

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has shut the barn door after the horses have left the barn (NCR, June 18, 2025). The USCCB for years has had a high priority campaign on getting its members and others to campaign against abortion. We saw many years of youth going to Washington to campaign in Congress to undo *Roe vs. Wade*. Nothing similar or stronger was done to get people to campaign against President Trump’s "Big Beautiful Bill".

The message I get from the USCCB is that its effort to defend the dignity of every person does not extend beyond the fetal baby. Is it any wonder that people feel no need to heed the bishops' exhortations on any subject or to remain active members

of the Eucharistic Community?

MARGARET BITZ
Fargo, North Dakota

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