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.

Bishops' statement inadequate

The U.S. Catholic bishops' new "Special Message" on immigration is a step, but a painfully small one (NCR, Nov. 11, 2025). In a moment when Catholic families are

being torn apart by indiscriminate raids, when ICE agents in masks seize parents on the way to school drop-off, and when fear saturates parishes across the country, "balance" is not a virtue — it is a failure of moral nerve.

The bishops express that they are "disturbed," "troubled," and "grieved." But feelings are not leadership. And they are certainly not enough when civil liberties, human dignity, and the safety of immigrant Catholics are under active assault.

It took 618 words for the bishops to offer a single clear sentence opposing mass deportation — a sentence added by amendment. There was no naming of ICE, no naming of abuses, and no call to organized Catholic action. A statement so careful that it avoids naming the harm doers risks becoming a shield for inaction rather than a summons to courage.

Catholic social teaching requires more. Our immigrant brothers and sisters — as well as the rest of us in the Church — deserve a Church that leads with clarity and moral resolve, not one that applauds itself for balancing lament with caution at this time in our history.

ROBERT STEWART
Chantilly, Virginia

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Bishops' silence

Brian Fraga begins his Nov. 10 piece on the U.S. bishops' fall plenary assembly with the words, "Amidst a polarizing political climate" (NCR, Nov. 10, 2025) No! The word "polarizing" is both a cliche and a copout. It's a short step from "polarizing" to both-sides-ism

But my further comments here are a critique of the bishops, not of Fraga:

How sad it is that we have to push and plead with the bulk of them to take a strong stand on immigration, the low hanging political fruit, when immigration is just one of several issues that the bishops should be screaming from the rooftops about.

Do they not know or care that our democracy is threatened by a tyrant right now? Do they not know that this same tyrant has been doing everything in his power, even beyond his legitimate power, to take away both healthcare and food from mid to lower income Americans during the shutdown? Do they not know that two successive presidents have refused to question unconditional military support for Israel, thus enabling a genocide?

Fraga quotes a current Jesuit, Thomas Reese, that there's a fear that if they make a big fuss, Trump will make sure no Catholic organizations receive federal contracts. Do the bishops want to be yet another institution that seeks to appease this tyrant? Did the Church learn any lesson from trying to appease Hitler?

(Fr.) MARK GEORGE, S.J.
Detroit, Michigan

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Gio Benitez confirmation

In light of the recent exchange at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting in Baltimore, I wish to express concern over Bishop Strickland's remarks—remarks which, according to himself, were neither timely nor pertinent to the agenda and which targeted not only Fr. James Martin, S.J., but more covertly the Paulist Fathers in New York City who ministered the sacraments to a gay man seeking to grow in his faith (NCR, Nov. 14, 2025).

Whatever one thinks of individual pastoral decisions, Strickland's intervention reflects a tone and posture increasingly out of step with the broader vision of the Church articulated by Popes Francis, Leo—and, indeed, by earlier popes such as Leo XIII, who consistently called the Church to engage the world with clarity, charity, and pastoral solicitude. Pope Francis repeatedly urged clergy to accompany those on the margins, to meet people where they are, and to remember that the sacraments are encounters with mercy, not rewards for the perfect.

As a supporter of the Paulist Fathers and their ministry, I have witnessed their fidelity, humility, and pastoral sensitivity. Their welcome of Gio Benitez along with his husband, demonstrated precisely the spirit of accompaniment the Church is called to embody. Their ministry—like that of Fr. James Martin—is less about politics and more about the Gospel mandate to seek out the lost, lift up the excluded, and affirm every person's dignity as a beloved child of God.

At a moment when many feel alienated from the Church, the Paulists are quietly modeling the pastoral heart our time desperately needs. They deserve support, not condemnation.

JASON ROBERTS
Liberty, Missouri

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