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.

Don't recycle discredited allegations

I am writing to voice my frustration and disappointment with NCR regarding the profile of Fr. Gary Graf, a brother priest who walked over 900 miles from Chicago to

the Statue of Liberty to raise awareness of the plight of immigrant children, culminating in an Interfaith Prayer Service near Battery Park (NCR, Dec. 4, 2025). The article, titled "After 900-mile trek, Chicago priest urges action and empathy on deportations," was an excellently written article which unnecessarily included a reference to a proven-false allegation against Fr. Gary in 2018.

The reference did absolutely nothing to enhance the story, and sadly, for some could be a distraction from the heroic journey of a great priest.

I appreciated NCR's great coverage in the past of proven sexual abuse by priests and cover-up by bishops. But I strongly disagree that proven-false accusations should remain a central part of a priest's biography.

(Fr.) LARRY DOWNING
Archdiocese of Chicago

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U.S. Church plays to conservative base

If you compare the Pew survey results (NCR, Dec. 15, 2025) with Mr. Hickey's column on silent shepherds (NCR, Dec. 16, 2025), it's plain that much of the hierarchy and clergy is playing to the base, which leans to the right in American politics. Speaking up on the social doctrine of the Church would upset the base. Younger priests are definitely more conservative and proud of it.

It is unfortunate that so many clergy and hierarchs have chosen to downplay or ignore the social doctrine of the Church particularly at this time. The Church in the U.S. has decided to play to this one side, and ignore the other.

They wonder why people have left and continue to leave the faith. My diocese is asking us to "Go Make Disciples" by bringing people back, but they don't realize they have left not because the Church is insufficiently traditional or conservative, but because the Church emphasizes such. The Church has decided to play to only a segment of the faithful and now has to live with the consequence: a smaller, more doctrinaire Church.

TOM HOVEL
McFarland, Wisconsin

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Self-interest and free market impede Christian health care policies

Fr. Thomas Reese's column "Christianity compels us to provide health care to the poor. Politicians must do their part" makes a lot of sense to me and the solution he offers (universal health care in the form of "Medicare for All") seems reasonable (NCR, Dec. 11, 2025). The only thing I have to quibble about is that there is no mention of the fundamental problem, which is that we do not know who we are. Democrats and Republicans both seem to think that we are whoever we want to make ourselves to be. Democrats end up trying to find ways to help everyone be whoever they individually decide to be and Republicans try to find ways to tell everyone who they should be and then devalue individuals who do not want to be who they "should" be or who fail to succeed.

Another related problem is that free markets assume that self-interest will ensure that everyone gets their fair share and that supply and demand is the mechanism for that myth. They do not realize that self-interest is a profoundly anti-Christian idea and they do not realize that supply and demand does not work for people without the resources to demand what they need.

MARK BEOGEL
Nashua, New Hampshire

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