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.

Participation and faith

Michael Sean Winters is spot on in describing how Pope Leo is emphasizing how the Second Vatican Council remains the Church's road map (NCR, Jan. 12, 2026).

However, there are two statements in his article that are problematic. The first is: "We are not the wine. We are not pouring the wine. We are the glasses and we receive it. Our job is to be, like any good glass, clean and spotless." That is not what Jesus taught. Rather, he said:"I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5). The branches are not passive. They grow and spread and nourish and protect the fruit of the vine. They have agency.

The second problematic statement is: "When we encounter a difficulty in the teaching of the church, do we try and convert ourselves or do we demand that the church convert to us?" As Vatican II teaches: We, the people of God, are the Church. The question should be: When the Church encounters a difficulty with its teachings, how does the Church leadership create space to listen to and more deeply understand the teaching and understand the difficulty members of the Church have with the teaching? And then how does the Church explore the possibility that the teaching in question might need some development in light of the "signs of the times" and the experience of the faithful? Yes, there is a problem when "we" demand that the Church convert to us. But there is also a problem when the hierarchy demands blind adherence to Church teaching as if we are ignorant children who are incapable of critical thinking.

JIM PURCELL
Los Gatos, California

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CUA Culture Shock

I was delighted and amazed to read Katherine Mackenzie's article on her culture shock at Mass at CUA (NCR, Jan. 13, 2026). As an 89 year old liturgy graduate of CUA back in the day when we were all enthused with the changes of Vatican II, it has been a long and sometimes frustrating journey over the decades experiencing the various struggles in the Church. I worked with my husband, Larry Johnson, teaching and training parish musicians and liturgists for some years. He spent his life writing and teaching about Eucharist, Mass and liturgical music. It is a blessing to read articles such as Katherine's which are so balanced, respectful and shows such a love of her faith. May many other young people read this article and take it to heart. Thank you, Katherine.

MARLENE WINTER-JOHNSON
Garden, Michigan

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Vance and Good

Regarding Mr. Grosso's article on JD Vance: as a very public and powerful figure, who as Mr. Grosso states has already been repudiated by not just one, but two popes, it is clear that Mr. Vance is committed to continuing on his merry, fascist way (NCR, Jan. 8, 2026). His behavior is obscene in its disregard for most of his fellow Americans, and humanity in general. In this specific situation, he has clearly demonstrated not only his approval but also his complicity in both the development of the encounter and its outcome, making him complicit in the death of Renee Good. His absolute unrepentance for the damage he has done so far, and is continuing to do daily, is both mind and soul-boggling, and a clear repudiation on his part of the most basic tenets of his purported Catholic faith.

BETH MORTIMER
Seattle, Washington

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