Opinion
Letters to the Editor



by NCR Staff

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March 13, 2026
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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.

Trent and marriage

In "What led St. Pope John XXIII to call Vatican II?" Michael Sean Winters states that the Council of Trent "altered the definition of what constituted a valid marriage"

(NCR, March 2, 2026). The Council of Trent did not alter the definition of what constitutes a valid marriage. What the council did was to create an impediment to the formation of a valid marriage by Catholics. Baptized Catholics, to enter a valid marriage must exchange marriage consent (speak their vows) in front of an official witness of the church and two other witnesses. This has nothing to do with the "definition" of marriage, which remained the same and remains the same after Trent to the present day. Indeed, the church "hath not the power" to change the "definition" of marriage, which is a product of divine and natural law.

Winters is a fairly good church historian, and a good journalist. He writes well, and usually gets the facts and the history of the church right, but this time I'm afraid he got things wrong regarding an important point. Having taught courses on marriage and the canon law of marriage for over twenty-five years, I am alert to misinformation about the Church's understanding of and teachings about marriage, and how canon law applies to the formation of a valid marriage. I felt it important, therefore, to correct this bit of misinformation in an otherwise interesting, informative and persuasive article.

(Fr.) PHILLIP BROWN
Baltimore, Maryland

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'Marty Supreme'

Jean P. Kelly doesn't know how much I needed this review at the end of this hellish nightmare of a week (NCR, March 7, 2026). Thank you!

Timothée Chalamet is an extraordinary actor, who starred in the best film of 2024 (Denise Villeneuve's masterpiece "Dune: Part Two") and now has given a perfect performance in the best film of 2025. The Academy's insistence that Chalamet demonstrate false humility in order to be awarded the Oscar that he earned is one of the many reasons why I haven't watched the show in years. And why won't "Marty" sweep like it deserves? Politics, and that's a shame.

Thank you again for this piece. I'll finish here by adding that Odessa A'zion isn't mentioned by name in the article but she's wonderful in the film.

JEFFREY JONES
Hamburg, New York

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Pastors must speak out

As I read the thoughtful editorial in the Feb. 27 issue of NCR, it occurred to me that the significance of bishops speaking out has another important aspect (NCR, Feb. 18, 2026). By letting the people know that the political hate of today is not in sync with Christ’s teaching, bishops may encourage parish clergy to include the same thoughts in their homilies. Yes, I know there may be parishioners who do not like it, and yes, it could impact revenue, but it is so important for us to hear Jesus’s teaching in the context of today’s governmental actions.

KARL HERTZ
Thiensville, Wisconsin

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