Opinion
Letters to the Editor



by NCR Staff

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

April 24, 2026
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Following are NCR reader responses to recent news articles, opinion columns and theological essays with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

Trump and Leo

President Trump's AI-generated image of himself as Jesus, and his attacks on Pope Leo XIV for criticizing his war, corrupt Catholic belief in the Incarnation, to say

nothing of undermining long standing sensibilities regarding church-state separation (NCR, April 13, 2026).

Trump's imagery grossly inverted the Incarnation: Trump the person became Trump the godhead—fully illuminated by heavenly light as he reaches down, apparently, to comfort a sick man lying helplessly beneath him.

The image of Trump incarnated also elevates him above religious authorities, whom the President as deity can simply dismiss for being merely and irksomely mortal.

Trump's efforts to delegitimize the pope's criticism also risk undermining the separation of church and state by sanctioning the exertion of political power through whatever means necessary, including making war.

U.S. Catholics should soberly consider choices facing them. The choices are about the kind of democracy we want to sustain and the blatant willingness of political leaders to degrade sacred religious principles to subvert it.

KEN ZAGACKI
Raleigh, North Carolina

***



Church decline

In his opinion piece on declining church attendance, Fr. Thomas Reese urges the Church to become more innovative and welcoming (NCR, April 10, 2026). As a

young, progressive Catholic woman, I agree, especially as it applies to my queer and trans Catholic friends longing for safe, accepting religious communities. But I also think declining church attendance may result partly from the same forces causing the loss of secular third places — areas outside the home and workplace where people can gather without having to pay a fee, purchase a product or be subject to advertising.

The individualistic, capitalistic nature of American society has resulted in the decline of third places, which don't provide financial gain to anyone. Zoning ordinances, car-centered infrastructure, and lack of transit options create barriers between the places people live, work, learn, relax and worship. After a day at work — often in a corporate environment that rewards productivity above all — many Americans make a long drive home, arriving too exhausted to participate in additional activities. On weekends, going to church competes with grocery shopping, spending time with loved ones and recovering from the stress of the work week. With all these pressures on their time and energy, it's no wonder many Americans must deprioritize religious participation.

I believe religious and secular third places can provide badly needed spaces for social and civic engagement. But for these spaces to thrive, we may need to rethink the basic organization of our society.

ABBY ROBERTS
Arlington, Virginia

***

Advertisement

Bishops and politics

I do not agree that the bishops' timing is the issue with their arguments for or against different policies from different political parties and presidents (NCR, April 14, 2026). Torrenzano speaks of the bishops seeing their role in unchanging terms entirely consistent with their roles as pastors who are reflecting doctrine in their rhetoric rather than politics. However, the reality, from my perspective, is somewhat less transparent.

The bishops through subtle arguments have for the past decade at least tailored their remarks to support Republicans while seemingly dismissing Democratic programs which enhance the social safety net. Their support for the latter seemed tepid when Democrats were vociferously championing benefits to the most economically vulnerable.

Torrenzano presents a litany of Trump policies which could seem to be a checklist generated by the USCCB of what they want in return for their support. That is not based upon doctrine but political timing. Trump is transactional as are many in the USCCB and they will give in order to take as the opportunity arises. Trump was their opportunity since the barrier between church and state under Trump is fluid at best but resolute, per the Constitution, under Democrats.

CHARLES A LE GUERN
Mount Holly, North Carolina

***