Opinion
Letters to the Editor



by NCR Staff

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May 29, 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.

Church must thoroughly repudiate slavery

I am sincerely grateful to the Holy Father for his explicit apology for the Holy See's legitimization of slavery, but we are long past due for a comprehensive document

from the DDF addressing slavery (NCR, May 26, 2026).

A sober magisterial examination of slavery in the history of the church would be a genuine first step in the process of healing still-open wounds.

I pray that Rome will also address the centuries-long role of Catholics, popes and saints included, in building a culture of hatred against West Asians. The West has never fully recovered from the psychic damage that was inflicted.

I am glad that many Catholics were aghast at Trump's threats to commit genocide against Iran, but we cannot just ignore the larger historical context of his evil remarks. Millions of West Asians have been killed or gravely harmed as a direct result of centuries of Catholic dehumanization of West Asians.

JEFFREY JONES
Hamburg, New York

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Heeding Leo requires organization

I helped lead the New Jersey death penalty abolition campaign as director of New Jerseyans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. In 2007, New Jersey became the first state to abolish the death penalty in 40 years. That campaign succeeded in part because of what happened in St. Louis eight years earlier.

In 1999, Pope John Paul II was celebrating mass before thousands. During his homily, he called for an end to capital punishment, describing it as "both cruel and unnecessary." He also urged the governor to spare a man facing imminent execution. The man's life was spared, and the moral context for abolition was set.

But it did not change the law. Organizing did. Our coalition showed up in church halls, coffee shops and anywhere New Jerseyans would listen. We changed the mind of key leaders. It was a strategic campaign, and it succeeded.

Pope Leo XIV's encyclical on Artificial Intelligence is a similar moment (NCR, May 25, 2026). In it he calls on us to "bear witness to the grandeur of humanity." But he doesn't stop there. He calls us to action, to "get our hands dirty on the construction site of our time." Pope Leo understands that statements are not enough. We need a movement.

The decisions now being built into AI systems, who gets hired, what our children learn, what information we see, will shape our daily lives. The companies building them are moving fast with little to slow them down.

In New Jersey, our coalition spanned faiths, neighborhoods, and parties. We need the same type of coalition now, before the moral architecture of this technology is set without us.

Leo has given Catholic leaders both the mandate and the moment. Now they need to organize.

CELESTE FITZGERALD
Charlottesville, Virginia

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Both/and

I would like to make a few comments regarding the column "Leo vs. Yale and the vocation of higher education" by Michael Sean Winters (NCR, May 18, 2026). Winters makes many good points, but I think he is too fast to draw hard boundaries between the vision of the university offered by Pope Leo XIV and Yale.

In defense of Yale, they do have a thriving and active Catholic center and campus ministry that offers students a place to be formed in the Catholic tradition and to receive the kind of education that Leo envisions.

I have attended a few public lectures offered at the Golden Center and have been impressed with the openness with which Yale students receive these Catholic presenters. Please note that I am not affiliated with Yale, I am a local businessman.

BEN DelMONICO
New Haven, Connecticut

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