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.

Just war theory

Michael Sean Winters' column "Why we can't toss aside just war theory" reported that the cardinals would discuss just war theory upon gathering in consistory this

month (NCR, June 22, 2026). I hold that just war theory was a sin when it was written, as what it taught was a violation of God's commandment "Thou Shalt Not Kill". Some in the Church give it precedence over the teaching of Jesus or present it as equal to the way of Jesus, the way of nonviolence .

In his article, Sean Winters writes:

> "What worries me most about the push to jettison just war theory is that it betrays a deeper inability to wrestle with the fact of evil in the world."

Didn't Jesus wrestle with the fact of evil in the world? When Jesus was born, the Roman Empire had been violently occupying Palestine for years. All of that violence did not lead Jesus to violate the commandment of God and fashion a theory to protect his people. He remained faithful to God, and gave a new commandment to his followers, "Love your Enemies. Do good to those who hurt you". He modelled his teaching when Roman soldiers arrived to arrest him. He admonished Peter, who drew his sword to attack a soldier, "Put down your sword. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword". Even to protect the life of Jesus, the life of God, we can not kill.

Please abolish just war theory.

KATHY BOYLAN
Washington, D.C.

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Religious freedom

Stephen Schneck properly asserts that religious freedom is a foundational right, one upon which all other rights depend (NCR, June 2, 2026). Two hundred and fifty years ago, founding fathers George Mason and James Madison grappled with the distinction between religious tolerance, which is allowed, and religious freedom, which is obligatory. The Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776, and the First Amendment of 1791 to the U.S. Constitution guarantees religious freedom, meaning that religion is kept out of government and vice versa. An American contribution to political thought has been our enshrining of religious liberty as an inalienable principle of republican self-government. The global threats to religious freedom, along with the rise of Christian nationalism in the United States threaten all of our freedoms.

DAVID E. BALDUCCHI
Springfield, Virginia

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Magnifica Humanitas and Tielhard

Unlike Sr. Ilia Delio, I do not find the *Magnifica Humanitas* generally inconsistent with Teilhard's perspective and even perceive some Teilhardian resonances (NCR, June 8, 2026). Pope Leo XIV uses a form of the word "remain" approximately 58 times in the encyclical but none of the references suggests that humans should stay where they are materially or spiritually, but rather progress in a more conscious way. Leo's vision is not static — "The perennial contents of the faith and ancient ecclesial wisdom find expression in a living doctrine that remains faithful to the Gospel while growing in response to the 'new things' of every era." The biblical images he cites point out the danger of a uniformity that chooses homogenization over diversity, a union that neutralizes differences, which recalls a key Teilhardian concept that true union differentiates. Leo is not expressing abstract theological principles, but a Teilhardian phenomenology that "the proclamation of the Gospel cannot overlook the concrete lives of people."

TRACY HIGGINS
New York, New York

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