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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.

Failure of US diplomacy

I have genuinely appreciated much of Winters' writing over the years that he has written for NCR and Whispers in the Loggia. I have found him to be even-handed and

even generous towards positions he disagreed with. Which is why I was disappointed and surprised at his piece on the failures of the U.N. and multilateralism (NCR, [Sept. 25, 2026](#)).

As a Canadian, I was perhaps hypersensitive to an American comment on the U.N. Yes, Russia has been a problem, but that's why the UN exists: to rein in the autocrats and demagogues. But the U.S. was supposed to be our partner in establishing democracy and human rights, ending colonialism, and encouraging third world development. Instead, the US has used its weight and its veto to promote its own interests, largely against the interests of the weaker states. You have pushed them into the hands of China and Russia, all while imposing one-sided trade policies and travel visas on these countries and their citizens.

It should not have surprised me that Winters could write an otherwise helpful text without once acknowledging the profound failure of American diplomacy over the past 70 years. The failure is not in defending American interests, but in not defending American values. Perhaps that is just too self-critical for an American audience.

NICHOLAS JESSON
Regina, Saskatchewan

Where are the clergy?

Nearly twenty years ago I drove across Pittsburgh on a rainy night to attend a mandatory session for prospective voluntary catechists. The subject was how to protect children from sexual abuse. I raised the question "But where are the clergy?" but received no answer. The ongoing parade of financial settlements with victims is a painful reminder of the shame and anger we Catholics feel for the abuse scandals, but we are still waiting for formal acknowledgment of guilt followed by meaningful reform of an obviously dysfunctional hierarchy (NCR, [Sept. 15, 2026](#)). Does the hierarchy feel that sermons and videos by priests and bishops endorsing right wing politicians will distract us from their persistent failure to show us necessary cultural change? The church is not "moving forward."

STEPHEN SANDRONI
Lexington, South Carolina



Lack of transparency

Thank you for putting into words what many of us feel in our San Francisco parish. The callousness and lack of transparency of our archbishop in assessing parishes to help defray the costs stemming from adjudicated clergy sex abuse cases exemplifies the hierarchal culture you describe. I believe that this "diseased culture" requires the metanoia that begins, as you say, with an examination of the hierarchy's "sinful and criminal activity" and concludes with a "full confession" (NCR, [Sept. 15, 2026](#)). I would add that renewed commitments to both the goals of Vatican II and the process of synodality are needed to create that healthier culture. The question is whether the bishops are brave enough to do the work.

JOHN VAN HAGEN
San Francisco, California

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Hygienic chalices

Karen Park's concern about the new restriction of the chalice in her diocese of Green Bay, Wisconsin causes the reader to examine their own experience in receiving or not receiving Eucharist under both species and contributes nicely to the ongoing

conversation about the why, when or where of it (NCR, [Sept. 15, 2026](#)). In my birth parish in California, communion under both species was introduced timidly in small groups during the early post Vatican II years, and, in a grand manner, in the early 90's scandalizing many. Those assigned as first eucharistic ministers were discredited with scathing remarks from opponents while learning to offer the chalice in a way that was as hygienic as possible. The newer techniques used during Covid helped some, but those of us more vulnerable did not like the thought, then, of possibly swapping saliva with our fellow parishioners. Moving to the present, it seems that various bishops are really trying to rethink the whole problem and, apparently, have the authority to decide what is best for their particular region. Whatever the case, a wise communicant will approach any situation they find themselves at the altar with the appropriate respect and gratitude befitting a true believer.

NANCY McGUNAGLE
Kalispell, Montana

Restricting the chalice

Karen Park's article "Restricting the chalice is not tradition — it's a troubling innovation," is timely and insightful (NCR, [Sept. 15, 2026](#)). I've noted the arbitrary additions and deletions that some priests and bishops authorize — like installing a communion rail or kneelers or reciting the rules necessary to qualify for receiving the sacrament. Dare we trust that the Spirit moves individuals to want to share in the banquet of the Lord, and save the list of requirements for another day?

Some extol the practice of receiving the host on the tongue, as if it's holier and needed to safeguard sacramental abuse. Both are false claims. Some presiders omit the Sign of Peace altogether or turn it into an abstraction — a generic prayer for peace. These sterile regimens are about privatization — shoring up distance and separation, a refusal to recognize that union with Christ is always grounded in and through the community. That's what Holy Communion means.

(Fr.) JOHN CUNNINGHAM
County Mayo, Ireland
