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.

Democrat and Catholic

Congressman McGovern is speaking for a lot of us out here that are still in the pews, somewhat uneasily (NCR, Oct. 21, 2026).

We look around us at a time when faith and the Republican party are in a very unholy alliance. We look at our parishes and realize that more than half of the people, especially if they are white, have voted for Donald Trump twice.

I think about this every time I distribute communion. But those hands, whether they be hands that pulled the lever for Trump or for a more progressive candidate, are still Catholic. Let's give Faith a good name that can very nicely go along with a progressive Democratic and progressive Catholic way of life

PAUL WILKES
Wilmington, North Carolina

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The Holy Spirit and doctrine

Michael Sean Winters asks an important question: "How do we know if we are listening to the Holy Spirit or only to ourselves?" (NCR, Oct. 9, 2026) And he concludes his article with this:

> "We should all be docile to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, but if we understand those promptings and they seem like a distortion of doctrine not a development, and out of whack with what our Catholic tradition has taught, we need to ask if we are listening to the Holy Spirit or only to ourselves."

Our Catholic tradition once taught that slavery was okay, that the sun moved around the earth, that usury was sinful, and that there is no salvation outside the Catholic Church. These teachings were flat out wrong! And the "we" who taught them was mostly the bishops and popes of the Church. Too often the sensus fidei has been ignored or discounted.

Our Roman Catholic tradition today teaches that women cannot be ordained as deacons or priests or bishops. That same tradition teaches that artificial birth control is sinful. But isn't it possible that the spirit has already "spoken" through many of our Protestant brothers and sisters whose communities have called women to be their servant leaders as ordained ministers? And many of these same communities (along with many Roman Catholics) have come to understand that an absolute prohibition of the use of artificial contraception is no longer morally defensible.

Too often our priests and bishops and popes forget that the grace of the Holy Spirit has been gifted to the baptized and confirmed as well as to those who have received Holy Orders. And the grace of the Holy Spirit has also been gifted to our Jewish and Muslim and Protestant brothers and sisters as well. And who is to say that the Holy Spirit is not active in Indigenous communities and other faith traditions like the Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists?

In launching the synodal process, Pope Francis seemed to recognize that our concept of the spirit has been too small. Yes, we need humility in making any claims of truth in the name of the Holy Spirit. But we also need honesty and courage to recognize when the spirit is telling us that a doctrine is no longer correct and we need not just development but transformation.

JAMES PURCELL
Los Gatos, California

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Grob apology

As a faithful member of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, I am gravely disturbed by Archbishop Grob's participation in the White House event (NCR, Oct. 25, 2026). To

me it shows his naivete or lack of basic understanding of what was to unfold. First, you get an invitation from the Heritage Foundation, the very author of Project 2025. Secondly, you are judged by the company you keep. As things unfolded, Grob could have bowed out and excused himself. He was a willing participant and at least a passive endorser of Trump and of his tribe.

MICHAEL WOYACH
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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Catholic school discrimination

If the definition of "catholic" is to mean universal then the restrictions placed by some ecclesial leaders upon children of same sex couples belies the definition. The editorial describes a travesty wherein children are made the scapegoats for parents whose marriages fall outside Catholic Church norms (NCR, Oct. 22, 2026) It was not very long ago, mostly prior to the Second Vatican Council, wherein the same restrictions were applied to all children of non-Catholic parents. The church recognized the negative consequences of that discrimination and non-Catholic children were welcomed into parochial schools.

What some leaders of the Catholic Church seem to not recognize is their obtuse adherence to exclusionary policies sends a message that the church is not as welcoming as they like to boast. In particular, discriminating against children is abhorrent since no child is responsible for the choices of their parents.

The late Justice Scalia stated unequivocally that adherence to church teachings does not permit ignoring the laws of the state. Could any church refuse welcome to individuals of a particular race or ethnicity? The answer is unequivocal since the Constitution forbids discrimination. Our history as a country is replete with examples of how we by law and through cultural change grew to accept others. Although acceptance is not yet universal the trajectory toward a more inclusive society is more positive today than it had been in years past..

Regardless of the exceptions which some people and institutions wish to invoke our laws remain to protect all from discrimination. The LGBT community appears to be one of the most recent targets of discrimination and that is also egregious. If the church does not wish to be equated with individuals and institutions which do not

adhere to our antidiscrimination laws it must allow for inclusion. If the church asks the question put to Christ "Who is my neighbor?", the answer must be everyone.

CHARLES LE GUERN
Mount Holly, North Carolina

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