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by NCR Staff

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[In her latest column](#), Phyllis Zagano assesses whether or not the Catholic Church can change. She writes that those who don't want change have a lot of clerical support and while those who do want change continue to speak up, many more are walking away from the church. Read the following responses from NCR readers to Zagano's column. The responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Can the church change? The question is: Does the church want to change? No. To change is to relinquish power and control, the hallmarks of Catholicism today.

The line about Pope Benedict XVI's stance on the laity is so contrary to what Jesus wanted and had in the early church. If he wrote Canon 129.1, he is still alive, let him unwrite it! This canon law stuff is getting really old and represents stagnant teachings.

Let the Holy Spirit breathe new life into this male dominated church. Women do represent half of society.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina



Phyllis Zagano provides a brief but incisive history of the church which explains its entrenchment. Raising the specter of alt-right — and even "disorganized progressive" — influence on the church also adds yet another level of pungency to the stubborn miasma which appears to be wafting through the Vatican's hallowed halls these days.

Overall, with patterns of mixed messaging, occasional epiphanies and general subterfuge, the place appears to need a hefty dose of Second Vaticanism. But at this juncture, who in charge will let anyone keep the window open? The growing option, instead, seems to be: obfuscate on pressing issues till the Roman Catholic Church can return to its long-standing marginalization of most things progressive.

R. JAY ALLAIN

Orleans, Massachusetts

Those of us who are senior citizens can recall vividly the sea change that occurred in the 1960s with the implementation of the Vatican II reforms. As an altar boy, I participated directly in the celebration of the Tridentine Mass and learned to recite Latin. Although I also learned the translations, I know many people in the pews read from their missals or recited prayers by rote without knowing what was being said and without any knowledge of the meaning behind what they were saying.

However, in spite of that barrier to understanding, many people were taken aback by the changes and wanted "their" church to remain static. Their comfort level was at risk and they thought they were being left behind. The refusal of the modern, post-conciliar church to embrace a changing culture gives many of us the same feeling of being left behind since the reversion to an older and certainly less-inclusive church is not what the Second Vatican Council promised.

What has become readily more apparent is that the population which seems more comfortable with a retrograde church with a smaller active population is also the population which does not embrace widespread participation in our public, let alone our church, governance. A few leaders of the church, enabled by their dependency upon funding from some quarters, are embracing a political stasis as well as a liturgical stasis as if anchoring themselves to today will ward off an undesired tomorrow when people who do not share their fears of change will become more active and influential.

If the church leadership does not change with our changing culture, they will only find themselves much like the people who felt left behind in the 1960s who believed the church left them and they were no longer welcome participants.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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