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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.

Vision of women in the church

Women being ordained in the Catholic Church may never happen, but it is not something I understand either (ncronline.org, [April 13, 2024](#)).

I have women chaplains at the St Louis Airport, they pray, bless, listen and guide in ways that others cannot. What they cannot do, is "THIS", as in "do THIS in memory of me". They certainly can and do set the table for the banquet, they provide the music for the celebration, they bring peace to the gathering, why can't they pray over the bread and wine and "DO THIS"? It is a question for the ages.

Meanwhile, I too, am a Catholic in the waves of turmoil, and totally inexplicable rules and requirements. But we are all part of the celebration, and it wouldn't be the same without us. Continue dear Carolyn to be the integral part that you are. Jesus and His Father smile on your efforts, and when the Judgment comes, I know where you will be, and it is a pleasant thought.

DEACON JIM MARTIN
St. Louis, Missouri

Excommunication editorial

Your editorial on the hypocrisy of the Louisiana Diocese was spot on (NCR, April 12-25, 2024)! I hope that Bishop Deshotel does some personal reflection so as to see himself in Matthew's Gospel: "they (the Pharisees) tie up heavy burdens and lay them on the people's shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them". The suggestion in the editorial is exactly what the Bishop should have done to console the Deacon and his family. If the Bishop was an employee of mine who missed the opportunity as badly as Bishop Deshotel did, he would be the one being called to the "principal's office".

JAMES NANTELL
Windsor, California



Tone-deaf diagnosis of Catholic Church decline

According to Michael Sean Winters:

"Jesus announced his ministry (Luke 4) by saying he came 'to bring good news to the poor,' and we are no longer poor" (ncronline.org, [April 19, 2024](#)).

My black Catholic mother is looking for a job at 80 years old because she is struggling to pay her bills each month. My black Catholic sister, a college graduate, has to live at home because she can't even afford a cheap apartment. Likewise for my black Catholic brother.

My mother only resumed attending in-person Mass this week after years of being fed up with the Church. She admitted to me that she has never experienced such overt expressions of white supremacy as she has in Catholic spaces and while interacting with white Catholics. My aforementioned younger siblings haven't so much as peeked into a Catholic church in years, all because "we are no longer poor" and too affluent and comfortable to need religion, right?

The National Catholic Reporter is by white middle-class Catholics for white middle-class Catholics!

There continues to exist a crying need for a Catholic media that is firmly rooted, theologically and ideologically, in the toiling masses of the world's Catholic workers and peasants, with a preferential option for those of us who are global majority people; who are LGBTQI, disabled, underemployed, unemployed, undocumented, unhoused, sex workers, incarcerated or formerly incarcerated. White middle class

Catholic outlets do not meet our needs at all!

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

Greater dialogue key to Catholic Church growth

In the '50's and early '60's I recall the church being full like it is now for Easter and Christmas (ncronline.org, [April 19, 2024](#)). However, the weekly masses were also well-attended by the same folks. The difference between then and now is the number of people who actually participated in Communion. Granted, since the Communion rules before the Second Vatican Council were somewhat onerous the changes likely have meant more people feel comfortable joining. This has been a great change for the better and I believe the increased participation supports my view.

The fact that many parishes are losing members is, in part, due, I think, to changes in demographics. The growth of the church in the South and West parallels the growth of those populations which have migrated from Northern and Midwestern states and also includes new arrivals from the global South. However, no one should be deluded to believe that demographics alone accounts for the attrition.

Although Mr. Winters alludes to some people who spoke about their spiritual needs not being met, those spiritual needs might actually have been related to wanting to be heard but encountering paternalistic condescension instead. If the Church wants to see growth in areas which are losing members the clergy needs to focus more on engagement with their congregations.

Pope Francis' mission to create an environment wherein laity and clergy routinely dialogue is a major step toward regaining the interests of the faithful. In the past, I recall, there was very little dialogue and that may have been a cause for some people to look toward alternatives. The church can be a source of social as well as spiritual engagement. When people state their spiritual needs are not being met perhaps what they are lacking is belonging, engagement, and being taken seriously.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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Live-streamed Mass pastoral life-line

Fr. Reese's recent article on "broadcasting mass" and how it unacceptably separates the faithful from the full experience and intention of the Mass misses an essential point (ncronline.org, [April 5, 2024](#)). He says that broadcasts should be limited to those who can, at the same time, receive communion. In our parish we do send ministers from every weekend mass to those unable to join us at the altar. As Pastor I can neither guarantee that these include all those watching our livestream, nor can I arrange a plan to make this possible. Just this morning I spoke with the wife of a parishioner who had suffered at home for many months. She said while her husband's illness prevented her from coming to church, she participated each week online and was so very grateful for that opportunity. She is among countless others who have said the same to me over the last eleven years we have been streaming our weekend masses as well as daily mass, funerals, and weddings. They have been gratefully received, and are, I believe, a blessing for those unable to attend. Is attending Mass in-person best and most desirable? Absolutely. Life, however, and its challenges make in-person attendance not always possible, and it would be a disaster if we were prevented from offering this for our parishioners.

FR. PETER C. CLIFFORD
Fairport, New York
