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Some Catholics speak derisively of other Catholics as "cafeteria" believers. The real issue is whether we are still feasting at the banquet of Catholic life, [said commentator Daryl Grigsby](#). Following are NCR reader responses to this guest column with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

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Daryl Rigsby's article gave me a jolt. I have been in the line-up in that café for years, but at the far end of the counter, anxious about food poisoning. This started on my First Communion day, when I was seven. We had to fast from midnight, so I wriggled through Mass with a headache. When walking up to the altar to receive, my hands joined piously in little white gloves, a black-gowned nun's arm swooped down across my face from behind and snatched my gloves off. From that point, all I could think about was if I would get my gloves back. And would the nun slap me with the stick when I got back to school? Holy Communion faded into the background. This destructive combination of unreasonable rules and fear of punishment permeated my formative years into adulthood. I stayed in the church because I wanted to know the truth, but dealing with the church's hypocrisy, inconsistency and harshness has made it difficult and burdensome. Now in my old age, Rigsby's article brought me a liberating joy, a sense of fresh air. This is surely of the Spirit!

**GABY ROUGHNEEN**

**Bedford N.S., Canada**



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Daryl Grigsby is right on target. No Catholic, not even popes or other members of the magisterium in unity with the pope, have the fullness of faith within them. The moment any Catholic starts to point fingers at fellow Catholics, they act as the proud pharisee in the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector. As Jesus clearly stated, it was the tax collector who went home justified before God.

**MANUEL PEREZ**  
**El Paso, Texas**

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I loved "We are all 'cafeteria Catholics.' So what? Let's enjoy the church's feast." by Darryl Grigsby, online July 7. Though I suspect I'm in the "pinko section" in my parish, I am tolerated. This writing reassured me that I am at the right banquet.

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We express our experiences in our choices. The teachings of the church do not change those experiences, but our experiences underscore how we react to the

directions presented to us. Many people are fearful of changes to things like institutions, which are familiar. When any organization makes changes, more conservative individuals will feel displaced. We are embarking upon changes to our church which will likely make individuals feel displaced. Today the changes spoken about in the run-up to the synod are embraced by many members of the church. However, skepticism and fear of change is also found. The idea of picking and choosing one's fealty to various church teachings has nothing to do with generational experience but more to do with the individual's personality. Many clerics appear to maintain an all-or-nothing approach to church social teachings. The rejection of some teachings in favor of others is sometimes seen as a rejection of the church.

**CHARLES A. LEGUERN**

**Granger, Indiana**

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When the pejorative term "cafeteria Catholic" came into vogue, I identified with it and felt a bit of shame — as it was intended to do. The term cafeteria Catholic requires nuance. There are some who are uniformed yet state this is not for me. Another might be fully informed while taking a similar position. Then there are cafeteria Catholics who are uninformed, trusting they are being led by honest men who do not lie to them. The fully informed group says it is right and just the church follows the inspiration given to it by the Holy Spirit as a gift from Jesus allowing it to be "more," yet make the man-made decision to discard it by rejecting Pope Francis. How can these cafeteria Catholics claim either Jesus is with his church until the end of time or the gifts of the Holy Spirit should be unimpeded? Which is the real cafeteria Catholic?

**MICHAEL J. MCDERMOTT**

**Texas, United States**