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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.

Plastic production key issue

My thanks to Earthbeat reporter Brian Roewe for his informative, concise account of the as of yet failed worldwide negotiations on our plastics problem (Earthbeat, [Dec.](#)

[5, 2024](#)).

I am especially grateful for his separating the issue of the production of plastics from that of their "downstream management." Being a consumer of plastic packaging, I usually hear and think about the latter: buying less, using less, and recycling more of it — the downstream stuff that many countries wanted to limit their attention to.

But clearly it's the production of plastics that all the world should focus on. As Roewe indicated, more than 100 countries want a "legally binding cap on plastic production," and for many good reasons: created from fossil fuels, 400 million tons of plastic are produced yearly, a number to triple to 1.2 billion tons by 2060; less than 10% of plastics get recycled, largely because many forms are unrecyclable; microplastics are found in the air, soil, and all parts of the human body; many such plastics are carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, and neurotoxicants. The other countries prefer keeping the focus on the downstream.

Dr. Landrigan of Boston College is quoted as calling a good treaty on plastics a treaty "to protect public health." I would add that it would protect all other life on earth as well, and our climate.

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Stowe's blessing of women acolytes

Kudos to Bishop John Stowe for blessing the ministry of three women acolytes in November (ncronline.org, [Dec. 16, 2024](#)). "I've waited long enough to get any direction from the USCCB" he is quoted as stating. This is a true pastor, unwrapping the gifts of the Church, much like the Magi. What wonderful leadership this Bishop models for us, bittersweet as our response may be. How pathetic that it has taken so long even to get to this point. Yet, all is a gift, and I rejoice.

BROTHER BERNARD SEIF
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McElroy's appointment

With Cardinal McElroy's appointment as Archbishop of Washington, the Pope might have a more elevated goal that has to do with the persona of McElroy himself (ncronline.org, [Jan. 5, 2024](#)). Clearly he is a person who embraces the non-negotiable dignity of every human being that finds expression in a reciprocally-conditioned autonomy and that extends to holding or rejecting religious beliefs. As a consequence, unlike so many of his bishop colleagues, McElroy enjoys a confidence in the role of religion in the public square that makes it unnecessary to hitch religion to any political establishment. Like so much of Francis' strategy, McElroy's appointment might be a step closer to a flourishing pluralistic society.

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