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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.

Trump's assault on the free press

It is true; it is fearsome; the free press is at risk in this nation (NCR, [March 31, 2025](#)). Trump's wielding of power over the media — especially his assaults on newspapers,

reporters and TV hosts — displays the presidential threat to free expression. Evidence of his effective authoritarian exercise of power is in the public acceptance and agreement with current strategies in policy and practice. At risk are former hallmarks of American values — freedom to speak, write, teach, and preach about political and social issues that impact human lives and livelihoods.

It is incumbent on all of us to resist unleashed power, to name the oppression, and to speak truth to power.

Thank you for your editorial. Please continue to speak for those of us who believe in truth-telling and in the effectiveness of public voices that challenge the current administration of silencing opposing voices and punishing pursuers of truth.

LENORE NAVARRO DOWLING, IHM
Los Angeles



Birth control as PCOS treatment

I recently read your article "My husband and I are choosing vasectomy" ([NCR, April 1, 2025](#)). While I absolutely sympathize with Ms. Chastain, as I also feel the pull to side with my conscience on many issues that the Church speaks on, I want to highlight how she described birth control pills as being a "Band-Aid" for polycystic ovarian syndrome. I have PCOS [polycystic ovary syndrome], and I need to be on the pill in order to not bleed 24/7. While I understand that birth control isn't for everyone with PCOS and how Ms. Chastain believes that the principle of double effect applies

to PCOS and birth control, I want to inform other readers that the "Band-Aid" analogy might be too much of a generalization for the complex issue of PCOS. According to [Westmed Family Health Care](#) birth control can help manage PCOS symptoms and even make them go away for good. I actually agree with much of Ms. Chastain's lines of reasoning in her article, but I thought that this was important to point out.

KELLY M.

Mount Holly, North Carolina

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What makes a Catholic writer?

I am writing in response to Diane Scharper's article, 'How do you know when you are Reading Culture Through Catholic Eyes?' (NCR, [March 22, 2025](#)), which discusses James T. Keane's "Reading Culture Through Catholic Eyes". While Keane's exploration of Catholic writers is thought-provoking, his definition of a "Catholic writer" warrants closer scrutiny.

Keane suggests that Catholic writers are defined by their engagement with Catholic dogma, but this alone seems insufficient. A true Catholic writer should not merely engage with the faith but actively embrace and reflect its teachings. His inclusion of atheists and agnostics as Catholic writers risks diluting this essential distinction. For instance, while Toni Morrison was baptized Catholic, her work does not meaningfully incorporate Catholic doctrine, making her an unlikely candidate for this category.

A Catholic writer is someone whose work is rooted in the faith and aligns with its moral and theological principles. Writers like Flannery O'Connor exemplify this, as their literature is infused with an authentically Catholic worldview, even when exploring difficult themes.

To preserve a meaningful definition of Catholic literature, we should distinguish between those who engage with Catholicism and those who live and write within its tradition.

PATRICK O'NEILL

Carnew, County Wicklow, Ireland