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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.

Traditionalism overstated

Bravo to the NCR editorial staff for its timely and astute offering "Is the Church really 'taking a step back in time?'" (ncronline.org, [May 16, 2024](#)). I, too, was chagrined at

the ominous spin of the AP article which conforms to mainstream media's penchant for suggesting "the sky is falling" on all things progressive, even, as you suggest, when the evidence can be highly suspect. As such, your piece acknowledged that while retrograde forces do certainly exist in certain quarters of American Catholicism — largely due to "nostalgia" for some mythic halcyon past, today's faithful truly represent a multi-colored people resisting simple classification or bent.

Whatever the headwinds — and they are many, countless believers today are forging an emergent vibrant faith less shackled by age-old clericalism, misogyny and racism. Without always articulating it, we also resist the drift towards some monolithic state religion: a captured faith undergirding a larger autocratic enterprise playing out in the political and judicial sphere.

Thanks, NCR, keeping your ears to the ground and vision steadfast on the Spirit of change.

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Butker out of his lane

I was overall disappointed with Butker's address (ncronline.org, [May 15, 2024](#)). In using themes that call for using one's vocation to better society, he professes it in a backdrop of cultural wars with ideologically charged rhetoric.

In addition, Butker seems to have his cake and eat it. He stresses the importance of staying in one's lane yet later states what he thinks will excite a majority of women the most - raising a family. Had I given this address, I would have referenced the words of St. Francis de Sales who famously said to "be who you are and be that well". This involves learning more about oneself, acknowledging one's ambitions and talents, and acting on them *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

Butker gets one thing right — society is changing. To this end, we too as men should spend more time with our kids or future kids whenever possible, cook meals, clean, and do laundry — skills that are often associated with "homemakers". Some of these activities may be therapeutic, but they are essential life skills. Choosing to help our future spouse or partner with homemaking reflects Christ's example of serving others before self. In contributing at home — while balancing careers — we too can promote a sense of equality, respect and dignity. This goes beyond a preconceived notion of masculinity.

Butker should know that my father married a woman who is a dedicated pathologist and was initially Hindu. Even before her conversion, she made my dad, my siblings, and myself better versions of ourselves.

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Faith must engage changes

Toward the end of her essay Ms. Scott notes that Ms. Hasson of the Person and Identity Project declares no one should go down the pronoun path and use the preferred address of the trans individual (ncronline.org, [May 21, 2024](#)). I fail to see how insulting an individual, under Catholic precepts or not as the case may be, is a recipe for engagement. Showing such disrespect, particularly from a standpoint of self-righteousness, is not only callous, it is potentially emotionally harmful, to a child experiencing gender dysphoria.

We can look back to recent history to see evidence of religious individuals denouncing scientific achievements be it the heliocentric description of our solar system, evolution, or now a phenomenon in which some individuals experience a mismatch between their physical and their psychological identity respecting their gender development. Science moves us inexorably into the future and we increasingly come to understand the nature of the universe as well as the spectrum of human nature. As such, the church needs to learn and adapt as must we all. Failure to adapt to a changing culture is a recipe for irrelevance and the church's loss of attendance is indicative of its growing insignificance.

If all of us are children of God then even those with same sex attraction and those with gender dysphoria must be treated as our siblings in the one family God created. Disparaging at worst or marginalizing at best those whom the church leaders see as problematic does nothing except highlight the hypocrisy of some ecclesial leaders and renders church didactics irrelevant.

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