

# Advocacy Resources

## How to Write a Letter-to-the-Editor (LTE)

Writing a letter to the editor (also known as an LTE) is the perfect way to offer a rebuttal, add another perspective, or just express your appreciation for an already-published article or commentary piece. Legislators both local and national also read LTEs to keep their finger on the pulse of their community. A well-written LTE can not only inform your neighborhoods, but can also influence your legislators.

**Please let us know if your letter to the editor on creation or the poor is published.** We'll help promote it to a wider audience. Completing this final step in the letter to the editor process helps ensure that your letter's impact is even greater. Email us at [organizing@catholicclimatecovenant.org](mailto:organizing@catholicclimatecovenant.org) with a link to your published LTE.

### General Tips

- **Keep it short (150-250 words)** – If you don't edit your LTE, the news outlet might edit it for you. Since they could cut out your main point, it's best to write something both punchy and brief.
- **Follow the rules** – You should be responding to a specific article or op-ed, so include the title and date of the piece you're responding to in your LTE. Send your LTE in the body of your email, not as an attachment. Include your full name, contact information, location, and profession or expertise in the email as well.
- **Be timely** – Try to get your LTE in on the same day the relevant article is published.
- **Look into alternate ways to respond** – If you watch a newsmagazine show that solicits viewer responses or interactions, send them a concise, pithy email or tweet. Look to see if your news outlet has interactive discussions with reporters, or if reporters are active on social media, and consider getting involved on those platforms.

### 5 Easy Tips

1. Start by referring to an event that has recently made headlines in your area. Include the headline of the story in the first sentence or two in your letter.  
Example: Last week's story Flu Season Hits Home for Area Families (October 1), discussed a major health issue for Virginians.
2. Connect the Church's teachings on caring for creation and caring for the poor. Climate change causes health issues, raises food prices, and leads to more extreme weather, among other things.  
Example: But climate change is affecting our families' health even more. It's been linked to a rise in respiratory diseases and heart attacks.



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3. State a personal reason why you care about this issue.

Example: As a teacher, I care about the sick kids in my classroom.

4. State that you echo Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and that you want action on climate change.

Example: That is why I'm standing with Pope Francis to support action on climate change.

5. Sign your name and write the name of your city.

Example: Sincerely yours, Joan Brown, Manassas, Virginia

## How to Write an OpEd

For your op-ed to reach people and educate them about the Catholic Church's teaching on caring for creation and caring for the poor, it needs to find a home in some sort of news outlet. You can get it published by pitching it to an editor, usually over email, and briefly explaining what makes your op-ed different, important, and timely. Here are some tips on how to first write and then pitch your op-ed.

### Steps to writing an op-ed: a sample framework

*Who are you, and how do you connect to the moral cause for climate action?*

- This could be your faith background, your work on justice or moral issues, your personal experience with climate change, or just a wide body of knowledge on the need for climate policy.

*How do you see the caring for creation and the poor as being part of something larger?*

- A connection to a global meeting of states (like a United Nations climate summit), so that outsiders can understand the relationship between the timing of your message and broader momentum around climate action. Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* is a key document in a series of moments that are driving the conversation around the imperative for a strong international agreement on climate change.

*Why do you specifically support climate action?*

- Draw from your own background, or the general background of the group you represent. Of course, there are a multitude of reasons to support climate action, but it's most impactful to focus on one or two, rather than listing off a large number. Don't just take the 30,000-foot view; find a reason why this is deeply personal to you and explain why it should be deeply personal to others.

*What are you calling for?*

- Now is the chance to make a connection to broader actions. The pope is an incredibly powerful figure to millions of people across the world, and his message resonates to more people than just Catholics. The papal encyclical will ask leaders to take strong stance on

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climate action, and you can urge them to hear the moral call and seize the moment to protect people across the world through an international deal.

## Quick tips for pitching your piece

- Submit wisely, but have backup plans
- Explain the news hook and your connection to it
- Keep it brief
- Follow up

## Steps to pitching an op-ed

- *Pitch thoughtfully* – First, don't submit your op-ed to more than one newspaper at a time. Second, think about where your ideas will be most relevant and where you might be most likely to get published. Some outlets, like *USA Today* and *The New York Times*, are much more selective than others. So while you can and should aim high, make sure you have backup plans for smaller or more subject-specific publications that might be more interested in case major outlets aren't interested.
- *Write an effective pitch* – Editors want to keep their news fresh and interesting for their readers. What makes this issue relevant right now? How is your hook or angle different from something readers might have seen before? What makes you the best person to write the op-ed? If you've got a well-written op-ed with an unexpected point of view, the pitch is the place to explain that. Explain why their outlet is the very best place for your op-ed, even if it's your third or fourth choice.
- *Be brief* – This point keeps coming up, but it's important. The pitch should be comprised of your idea (a few sentences), your relevant credentials, your contact information, and the finished piece, pasted into the email. Don't attach it, and don't explain the whole piece—they'll read it.
- *Follow up* – No matter whether the editor responds or not, you'll want to follow up with them. If they respond, thank them regardless of whether they said "yes" or "no." If they don't respond, send them an email politely explaining that, since your hook is time-sensitive, if they don't get back to you by a certain time you'll assume they've passed on it and will be submitting it elsewhere. The amount of time depends on exactly how timely your news hook is.