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by NCR Staff

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San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone declared May 20 that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is not "to be admitted" to Communion unless and until she publicly repudiates her position on legal abortion. Cordileone has only "demonstrated the degree to which his own crimped ecclesiology has brought the culture wars into the life of the church in this country," wrote NCR political columnist Michael Sean Winters. And columnist Phyllis Zagano says the battle between Cordileone and Pelosi "may be seen more broadly as one battle in a decades-long disintegration of

trust between women and the bishops." Following are more NCR reader responses that have been edited for length and clarity. You can read responses in part one here.

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone seems to prefer to publicly place himself in opposition to the judgements emanating from the Vatican whether in his response to COVID-19 or his invocation of an interdict over the Eucharist. In both instances, he has managed to potentially cause harm to individuals and to the church politically. In both cases, he defaults to the primacy of his own conscience which is in actuality his own self-righteousness.

Michael Sean Winters suggests that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi appeal to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and there is merit to that argument. She is neither encouraging nor facilitating abortion but acting in recognition of what she believes are the overarching concerns for individual rights and responsibilities which define all our citizens. Cordileone is likely not ignorant of the Constitution and the responsibilities of our elected officials to act in accordance with it in spite of personal beliefs which might be contrary.



Although I would welcome the humiliation of Cordileone by the CDF with the assertion that Pelosi may not be denied Communion, the result of that scenario could only be enhanced fundraising from his more politically engaged benefactors as well as politically engaging more of his Republican supporters. I have no doubt that is part of his calculus in taking the steps he has taken; enhanced fundraising, engaging the right-wing base and showing defiance to Pope Francis.

CHARLES A. LE GUERN

Granger, Indiana

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I must respectfully disagree with Michael Sean Winters that the archbishop's Communion ban on House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is harming the church even more than it is the House Speaker. As a Hebrew Catholic who is also a paralegal, the analysis set forth seems flawed in several ways.

Firstly, I believe it is unfair to suggest that the archbishop is "browbeating" Pelosi by invoking the very Canon 915 cited by Winters barring "obstinate sinners" from Communion. Abortion is considered a sinful act, and the actor may and should certainly avail themselves, if properly disposed, of the church's remedies. However, to not do so, by choice, and then to advocate for that act and give it moral legitimacy, and public approbation as a Catholic in a very influential and visible political life, certainly seems "obstinate."

Canon 213 and 843 referred to are not absolute, and are qualified by "properly" receiving them; and, it can be easily argued, regarding Canon 1398, as in our own secular law, that one who promotes an unlawful, in this case sinful act, is more guilty and dangerous to the public good than the one who commits such an act.

So, the parties who berate and criticize the archbishop in such a manner are, in my view, the ones unjustly politicizing a pastoral decision. Pelosi can, and may certainly appeal it. Nevertheless, we should not be so quick to judge the archbishop.

CHRISTOPHER P. FISHKIN

Kihei, Hawaii

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For several decades, I have wondered why, in depicting the Trinity, the church chooses to symbolize the father as an old man, the son as a young man, and the Spirit as an animal instead of a woman. Does it not say something about the ranking of women below animals in the eyes of the church (read: male hierarchy)?

CHERYLE BARTOLO

Poland, Ohio

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If there is a supposed rift between women and the church, then the answer is simple: we side with the church. As the article actually suggests, San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone is upholding canon law.

That is his job.

Phyllis Zagano is not only wrong, she is promoting a tired anti-Catholic narrative that the church doesn't "get" women. In reality, the Catholic Church granted women social and political rights long before it was cool, much to the chagrin of our Protestant friends. Those rights, however, do not include breaking the natural law set by God when he created this world.

JOHN CROY

Dallas, Texas

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Back in 1972, I studied political sociology at the Australian National University. A subject I would strongly recommend to all Catholic bishops, including the bishop of Rome. It would seem they have no idea how the natural law worked in Indigenous societies before they were colonized by western Christian missionaries.

I see the same thing happening in the grand sweep of U.S. history. First with Native American tribes, then with slaves imported from Africa, then with the subjugation of females.

Until the bishops recognize they have no idea about what women want and deserve to be free to pursue, American society and the Christian churches will become more and more fractious.

JOSEPH QUIGLEY

Tomakin, Australia

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I find so much comfort in Phyllis Zagano saying what I have believed for a very long time. The hierarchy of the church, men, of course, find it difficult to admit their anger at women in power, so they publicly chastise them. You go, Nancy Palosi.

TERI HALL SMITH

Reile's Acres, North Dakota

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I am mystified that the archbishop wants to withhold the Eucharist from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Looking at the facts: the Speaker has five children and several grandchildren; she has considerable "standing" on the subject of women and issues that pertain to women.

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, on the other hand, is not on record as a friend of women. He has previously "gone to the mat" over — a statue of Junipero Serra. Is this just another case in which the archbishop is grandstanding?

What better role model for a Catholic mother could he ask for?

Maybe we should ask, what would Jesus say to all this? "Judge not and you shall not be judged" comes to mind.

JEANNE LESE

San Rafael, California

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Having been raised and educated as a Roman Catholic, I saw and experienced the hypocrisies of the church, especially in the late 1980s when my marriage (conducted within the church) ended. I might add, we had no children.

I was informed that for the sum of $3,000 that I had an exceptionally good chance of obtaining an annulment of the marriage, as my wife was not warmly disposed to bringing up any children that we might have had within the church.

I am astounded that an archbishop has taken such action against the House Speaker. The U.S. is supposedly the "the land of the free." It would seem that freedom of speech and the right to voice one's opinion are however exceptions to that claim or assertion.

The church needs to do some serious navel-gazing, as do people within the U.S. When a country can look at revoking a law permitting abortion (*Roe* v. *Wade*), but can let people freely purchase military-style weapons which are used far too frequently to kill people, in particular children, something is seriously wrong within that society.

KEVIN MARSHALL

Hawkes Bay, New Zealand

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