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by NCR Staff

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[Two women say a priest denied them Communion](#) when they wore rainbow masks to a Feb. 11 Mass at All Souls Parish in Englewood, a city just south of Denver. The women wore rainbow masks to Mass to support a teacher fired from a Catholic school because she is in a same-sex relationship. The archdiocese said that shows the women are "not in communion with Christ." Following are NCR reader responses to this story that have been edited for length and clarity.

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I found the article about Denver Catholics being denied Communion interesting. As a lay individual, and certainly no expert in canon law, I am trying to understand what is allowed and what is not in terms of receiving Communion.

I read this as saying that, at least in the Archdiocese of Denver, a person wearing a rainbow mask in the Communion line is participating in a grave mortal sin. However, apparently it is not, or was not, a grave mortal sin for a member of the clergy to abuse minors or non-consenting adults, have that abuse covered up by a member of the hierarchy, and all go on and sanctify and provide the Eucharist. Something is not making sense here.

And, many wonder why U.S. church is so good at emptying the pews.

**THOMAS D. HOVEL**

**McFarland, Wisconsin**



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Bravo to writer Katie Collins Scott for her probing article on the barring of Holy Communion from three women wearing rainbow masks in support of a fired teacher. The incident, frankly, reeks of the harsh judgmental mindsets long associated with pre-Vatican II Catholic clergy.

And how ironic the issue was prompted by the sacking of an established teacher for her sexual orientation since the church has long championed dedicated teaching as a vibrant cornerstone of its social mission. Ironic, too, as Jesus' life modeled consistent concern for the ostracized and demeaned. It seems caring has been trumped by religious correctness in some Catholic circles.

**R. JAY ALLAIN**  
**Orleans, Massachusetts**

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I am concerned that Elizabeth Sweeney Block's remarks have been used to misrepresent church teaching on conscience.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church addresses errors in judgement of conscience at paragraphs 1790-1794:

Ignorance of Christ and his Gospel, bad example given by others, enslavement to one's passions, assertion of a mistaken notion of

autonomy of conscience, rejection of the Church's authority and her teaching, lack of conversion and of charity: these can be at the source of errors of judgment in moral conduct. (1792)

Scott's article seems to be encouraging a "mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience" and "departure from the Church's authority and her teaching," both of which the Catechism identifies as "the source of errors of judgement in moral conduct"

Correcting this "mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience" and "departure from the church's authority and her teaching" is a responsibility of all faithful Catholics. Most especially those with a national platform such as the writers employed with your publication.

**ANTHONY CRAIG**  
**Ottawa, Ontario**

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If primacy of conscience is not just a slogan, then the women in Scott's report, who acted in solidarity with women who have been marginalized for having a same-sex relationship, have been showing true Christian charity. If the church wants to follow Pope Francis' example by becoming charitable and inclusive, then some clerics need to put aside their animus and their desire to create a smaller and exclusive club. The people who will leave the church as a result of having been treated as less than worthy will be joined by those whose sense of true Christian charity will not permit any of the faithful to be treated as second class.

When some prelates, and their priests, make a show of solidarity with the bigots, who are ostensibly shielding themselves by arguing religious freedom, that negates the very idea of acting according to conscience. These public gestures also contribute to the atmosphere which enables bigots to act out of their animus since they see an institution, the Catholic Church, acting in a similar way. The public marginalization of LGBTQ people by the church leads to wholesale marginalization in society at large by individuals who need to assuage their "consciences" over their own bigotry by seeing some of our prelates act in a similar fashion.

If the church wants to become a welcoming and inclusive institution which Christ advocated for his followers, then all the clerics in the hierarchy need to recognize that lip service about inclusion and welcoming does nothing to promote Christian charity when the actions of those same prelates speak with a louder voice.

**CHARLES A. LE GUERN**

**Granger, Indiana**