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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.

Augustinian eldercare center

Congratulations to George Kommattam for this warm and well-observed report, and to the Augustinian Sisters for the vision behind Elizabeth Home (GSR, [Sept. 3, 2026](#)).

Sr. Prema's remark that many older people have someone to feed them or give them medicine but no one to listen to them is the truest description I have read of what aging alone feels like.

This model deserves wider attention in Kerala, where many convents are blessed with generous buildings and grounds that now lie largely idle as vocations decline, and where several congregations are searching for a mission that matches their present strength. Some have grown quite cut off from the world outside their walls. Opening those spaces to elderly laypeople would answer both needs at once, giving the sisters purpose and company while offering residents the kind of care no commercial arrangement can guarantee.

I live in a retirement community and can vouch for what the sisters describe. Shared meals, shared routines and unhurried conversation change the experience of old age completely.

SANTHOSH EAPEN
Kerala, India



San Francisco payments failure in governance

This is regarding the article about the Archdiocese of San Francisco parishes that are asked to foot the bill for the latest sex abuse settlement there (NCR, [Aug. 20, 2026](#)).

While paying this can be fashioned as "an act of solidarity with survivors" and victims of sex abuse, it is not clear to me why laity is made to bear the burden of this penalty, which was largely made possible by the failings of clergy, whether as perpetrators or enablers.

Suddenly, we are all church, all of us are now called to the table? While I admit that solidarity with sexual abuse survivors is laudable, healing and, in some cases, even heroic, I would take that a step further. I think it would be fair to make laity an integral part of the process that studies the complaints and accusations of clergy misconduct that continue to surface at the diocesan level.

It is time to rip asunder the veil of secrecy and clericalism surrounding these proceedings, from which laity is usually excluded.

CARLOS VENEGAS

Denver, Colorado

San Francisco payments stunning hypocrisy

In response to your article on San Francisco parishes facing massive abuse settlement bills, Dignity San Francisco stands in absolute solidarity with the survivors (NCR, [Aug. 20, 2026](#)). They unequivocally deserve full justice and restitution. At the same time, the hypocrisy of the archdiocese in funding this settlement is glaring.

The sexual abuse crisis and its cover-up were not the fault of the laity; they stem directly from an unaccountable, all-male clerical caste that protected its own power and reputation at all costs. Now, the hierarchy is forcing the laity to bear the financial burden of these systemic sins, seemingly arbitrarily imposing multi-million-dollar levies on parishes-even as it remains unclear whether lay parish finance councils were ever consulted. This "taxation without representation" reinforces an unjust "pay, pray, and obey" dynamic, draining the life from vibrant, welcoming communities to save the institution's skin.

It is important to keep in mind that this tax on parishes revictimizes the many communities, families, and individuals from whom the Archdiocese allegedly withheld information about abusive clerics.

Furthermore, Archbishop Cordileone has spent years aggressively policing the morality of LGBTQ+ Catholics. It is a profound double standard to weaponize church teaching against marginalized communities while turning to the laity to bail out the catastrophic moral failures of the male clerical elite.

We urge everyday Catholics to discern whether to continue financially supporting the diocese, and to withhold bailout funds until genuine structural reform is enacted. Writing a check does not solve the root rot. There must be no financial rescue until the magisterium of the Church is reformed to include laypersons-representing married and single members, including the LGBTQ+ community-in shared governance and decision-making, particularly in deciding how the diocese meets its financial obligations to victims and survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

Meaningful repentance requires the Catholic Church to dismantle its exclusionary male clerical state, embrace transparency, and open governance and ministry to all.

Thomas Lucas
Co-Chair, Dignity San Francisco

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Women's diaconate

Don't expect any *motu proprio*s from Pope Leo XIV until he is firmly convinced that ordaining women to the diaconate will not provide any theological ammo to those of us who want to see women ordained to the priesthood (NCR, [Aug. 29, 2026](#))

Again, women will not be ordained to the diaconate in the Catholic Church until the "theological confusion [that] has led to the diaconate being yoked to the priesthood in unhelpful ways" is decisively neutralized to the pope's satisfaction.

Is there a cultural barrier? Yes, but I believe if that were the primary barrier Pope Francis would have authorized the ordination of women to the diaconate, at least in limited circumstances. The primary barrier was theological. I believe it still is.

Theologians who hope to see Catholic women deacons in their lifetimes need to loudly and persuasively argue that the ordination of women to the diaconate

is perfectly consistent with the inadmissibility of women to the priesthood. It is their arguments that will make possible the motu proprio that Dr. Zagano dreams of.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York
