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## A reverse invitation from an Episcopal priest

by Maureen Fiedler

NCR Today

When I opened up Religion Dispatches this morning, I knew that the Vatican unraveling over the burgeoning sex abuse scandal had reached a new stage. The Rev. Randall Balmer, an Episcopal priest, issued a call to his ecclesial leaders to issue an invitation to disheartened Catholics to join the Episcopal church.

It's an Episcopal answer to the invitation Pope Benedict XVI issued to disheartened Episcopalians last October to join the Catholic Church if they were dismayed by their church's ordination of openly gay or lesbian priests and bishops.

Balmer says, in part, "I gather that the lesson from the Vatican is that homosexuality, even on the part of those in loving, committed relationships, is sin, must be exposed to the light of day for its shamefulness and must never be countenanced. It's okay, however, to turn a blind eye to pedophile priests, to reassign them quietly to do harm elsewhere or simply to ignore the problem. I'll take my Episcopal Church, warts and all, any day."

I read this with deep sadness. Not long ago, a friend told me that he had left the Catholic Church to become an Episcopalian. "The church left me," he said. "I did not leave her." And he's not alone.

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