

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

June 30, 2010 at 10:31am

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## Reduced to being the earth's salt and savor

by Melissa Musick Nussbaum

My Table Is Spread

I was not raised in a linguistically sensitive family. My parents called us "stupid" when they thought we were. They employed the full range of locally well-known, inaccurate and often hateful words and phrases for people of different skin colors and abilities.

I say this to assure you that I am not squeamish. My mother, nearing 92, can, and does, still tell me I look or am acting like a "pinheaded idiot," and the words register in my Texas-toughened brain as a suggestion to take off that outfit, or to stop whatever it is I'm doing.

And yet I cringe every time I hear a bishop or cardinal speak of the penalty, the punishment, the threat of taking a priest found guilty of serious misconduct and "reducing him to the lay state."

Read the full column here: **[Reduced to being the earth's salt and savor](#)**

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