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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.

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Cecilia Gentili

I want to express my deep concern regarding the recent funeral held at St. Patrick's Cathedral for Cecilia Gentili, a renowned activist for the trans community, sex

workers, and people living with HIV (ncronline.org, [Feb. 27, 2024](#)). The cathedral's pastor, Msgr. Enrique Salvo issued a statement criticizing the "scandalous behavior" that "degraded in such a sacrilegious and deceptive way" the cathedral. He also acknowledged that a Mass of Reparation, a liturgy aimed at expiating harm caused by sin, had been conducted.

However, I cannot help but wonder if there has ever been a Mass of Reparation for the harm inflicted upon LGBTQ Catholics. Despite Pope Francis' outreach efforts toward the LGBTQ community, many individuals within this community continue to feel unwelcome in their church due to the persisting presence of homophobia.

It is essential to recognize that while it is indeed sacrilegious and scandalous to commit transgressions against the church's physical structure, the most significant wrongdoing lies in the harm inflicted upon one another as "Temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19). Homophobia defiles the sacred space within each of us and, in the eyes of God, is also considered "sacrilegious" and "scandalous."

**FR. MISAEL AVILA**  
**Turlock, California**

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Thanks Bishop Stowe and Fr. Horan

We want to express our gratitude for Bishop John Stowe and Fr. Daniel Horan for their commitment to, and support for the LGBTQ+ community. Bishop Stowe has been consistent and outspoken over the years through NCR and in his diocese. Most recently, he participated in the New Ways Ministry event inviting bishops to listen to trans individuals and their families ([ncronline.org](https://ncronline.org), [March 1, 2024](#)). He does listen, and gives support and hope to gay couples like us.

Fr. Horan's article on the blessing of same sex couples reflected his perspective on an honest small step forward for many in our community ([ncronline.org](https://ncronline.org), [Jan. 11, 2024](#)). We wouldn't request or need a blessing, but we are grateful for his very clear and honest article. His words were a validation of who we are as a gay couple. We have been blessed by our parents, family and friends who love us and embrace us fully.

Finally, we are grateful for Archbishop Charles Scicluna who has addressed optional celibacy ([ncronline.org](https://ncronline.org), [Feb. 7, 2024](#)). If I (Frank, an ordained priest) could have, I would have continued serving as a priest, had the church had the wisdom to change. Yes, I have a husband and we adopted four children, but the real question is what really matters? The call for both of us was and is to serve, to be self-giving, and we like so many, celibate or married, try to live that way.

**FRANK AND JERRY GOLD**  
**Denver, Colorado**

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Louisiana Excommunication

I have degrees from two Jesuit universities and worked as a Catholic high school religious educator and music minister for 27 years ([ncronline.org](https://ncronline.org), [March 27, 2024](#)). My husband and I raised our sons in the church. My youngest brother is a member of the De La Mennais order. Catholicism is part of my DNA, but I am no longer Catholic.

After confronting my own childhood abuse at the hands of two Catholic priests, even after discovering among family a total of six victims of these same two priests, and even after Boston in 2002, I remained a faithful Catholic. I taught my students that

an imperfect human institution was admitting its wrongdoing and was committed to change. But then it became clear that my church's dis-ease was so deep, so systemic, that no real change was taking place - Cardinal Francis E. George, the author of the charter to protect children, was himself protecting an abuser and had been for years. Heartbroken, I resigned from teaching and left my church.

The United Church of Christ eventually became my spiritual home but I was never excommunicated. My husband pointed out that I was a lay woman so my exit was inconsequential.

Mr. Peyton, having my child abused would have been so much more excruciating than suffering abuse myself. I don't want to imagine it. I am glad that you, like me, found a new faith home. Finally, I will "hold you and your family in the light" as the Society of Friends beautifully prays.

**MONA VILLARRUBIA**  
**Metairie, Louisiana**

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