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by NCR Staff

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[San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone declared May 20](#) that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is not "to be admitted" to Communion unless and until she publicly repudiates her position on legal abortion. Two days later, [Pelosi reportedly received the sacrament](#) at a Catholic church in the nation's capital. And three other bishops from the conservative wing of the U.S. Catholic Church [followed Cordileone's lead](#), banning Pelosi from receiving Communion in their respective jurisdictions. Following are NCR reader responses to this news. The letters have been edited for length and clarity.

Suppose an archbishop bars a Catholic politician from receiving Holy Communion due to supporting a doctrine that is contrary to official Catholic teachings. Some might suggest that such an action is a rather confusing and possibly incorrect application of church law and a seeming contradiction of the United States Constitution.

First of all, politicians are bound by oath to represent their constituents. If a politician ignored such a high-profile voter preference, they could be removed from office in the next election. Yet, the Catholic Church says to support such a position will result in loss of receiving a sacrament. In the denial of Communion, it is adjudged that a mortal sin has been committed. However, one of the three requirements for moral sin is full consent of the will. This is a classic moral dilemma for the politician: such a person is under duress and cannot make an entirely free decision.



Secondly, a person who "supports" a non-Catholic doctrine has not actually enacted the particular doctrine in question. Another requirement for a mortal sin is termed "sufficient matter." The anti-Catholic doctrine already exists. The politician has no power to sustain or eliminate the doctrine. The Supreme Court is apolitical.

Furthermore, God has granted each person a free will. Simply because another person favors/supports a certain measure is no guarantee that another citizen must or will follow the advice. Thus, one could advance that the proposed scenario fails because it is unable to assure guilt beyond reasonable doubt — since a politician has no standing in such matters.

MICHAEL OSLANCE

St. Louis, Missouri

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone should obey the pope and get in communion with his brother bishops in the U.S. bishops' conference before he causes a schism. Most U.S. Catholics believe in allowing abortion in certain situations.

He might pay some attention to the Catholic Church's social justice teaching regarding the equality of all persons created and loved by God. He might look into some of the activities of large corporations funding the movement leading the church into a possible schism.

JAMES CORR

Cleveland, Ohio

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone and former President Donald Trump have at least one thing in common. They know how to exploit a power vacuum. Trump's "Make America Great Again" and "drain the swamp" were messages that resonated with millions of white Americans in fear of "losing their country." Likewise, Cordileone has stepped up to take the lead against Pope Francis and what the archbishop considers the pope's lukewarm stance toward American Catholic politicians, specifically President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and their refusal to support the abolition of abortion in this country.

To Francis and his guidance that the Eucharist not be drawn in to the politics of abortion, the archbishop is daring Francis to "put up or shut up." Cordileone is doing what many on the Catholic right have wanted done but no one else has stepped up to do. That is to condemn what the Catholic right considers their support for abortion and to inflict the ultimate penalty on the one person Cordileone can punish, Pelosi.

Francis is a wonderful human being and a hero to many. But if he refuses to stand up to Cordileone and his politicization of the Eucharist he will be seen as a weak

leader and a man of more talk than action. And if Cordileone gets away with his power play, who and what are next in eroding Francis' authority and leadership?

BILL KRISTOF

Parkville, Maryland

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Doesn't the archbishop of San Francisco know that the Eucharist is nourishment for the community rather than an award for good behavior?

ED HOFFER

Cincinnati, Ohio

I am saddened that Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone fails to see the shining example of Jesus living out his own overall message through the act of sharing his body and blood with his betrayer. No clearer demonstration of "love your enemies" can be found. No more specific act of sharing the Eucharist with the unworthy can be named. We don't need to ask, what would Jesus do? The answer is right there in the synoptic Gospels.

WILLIAM H. MCANALLY

Granbury, Texas

I am a cradle Catholic. Please explain to me why the National Catholic Reporter opposes a bishop teaching someone to follow God's commandment, "thou shalt not kill"?

Our bishops are the shepherds of God's flock. For bishops, cardinals, priests, or any religious to stand by in silence while a public figure denounces God's law would be

sinful on their part. It is their calling and their duty to help guide us to our own salvation by their leadership.

If a bishop cannot speak out against a sin, then by the same token, they cannot hear confessions and give penance, either. The same applies in both circumstances.

NANCY BRADY

Ankeny, Iowa

San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone is being presumptuous as well as mean-spirited in asserting the authority to deny Holy Communion to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, until Pelosi votes the way the archbishop wants on abortion as a matter of civil law.

It is presumptuous of the archbishop, because in leaving us the Holy Eucharist, Jesus said, "take of this all of you and eat of it, for this is my body."

The archbishop wants to rewrite the words of consecration to add a clause saying "all of you except Pelosi."

This is right in the teeth of the teaching of Jesus.

It is also cruelly hurtful to Pelosi, a lifelong observant Catholic and the mother of five children, and to her family.

FRANK LINDH

San Rafael, California

So where does that leave us?

If you don't like this bishop, cardinal, priest you can go to a different bishop, cardinal, priest and get the answer you want. That's not new, of course, but as in this example it is broadcasted.

Who gets Communion or not seems to depend on the reigning diocesan hierarch. So regardless of my state of being (i.e. sinner, repentant, etc.) and relationship with Christ, it is up to someone else whether I am worthy to receive Christ. And that someone else is not Christ.

I confess, I don't know a resolution to this. There are different standards in different dioceses, parishes, ministers, and lay people within the church. Maybe that's the only way to do it since we are all different and have different layers of faith, religiosity, understanding and belief. I once knew of three abutting dioceses with three different programs, processes and ages for confirmation. Each bishop, of course, knew "best." Then when the bishops changed, so did the programs, processes, ages.

So what's a person to do but follow his or her own conscience? Or, perhaps as the Buddhists humbly point out, everything is impermanent.

DAVE MURRAY

Cedarville, Michigan

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