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by NCR Staff

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On a pragmatic level, the church should be concerned about how discrimination against LGBTQ folks has young people walking away, but such discrimination is also inherently sinful, [argued Franciscan Fr. Daniel Horan in a recent column](#). Following are NCR reader responses to the column that have been edited for length and clarity.

Praise the Lord! What a breath of fresh air!

If I could write eloquently and recalled our history (all those times our Catholic scribes and Pharisees rejected Jesus' generosity of spirit) I'd have written Franciscan Fr. Daniel Horan's grave warning yet beautiful article myself.

Reading this article, for me personally, was like Jesus walking by and seeing me sitting by the side of the road, thirsty, very thirsty, stopping and kindly bending down and giving me a great big bottle of cool, refreshing water.



I want to share this article with so many loved ones who resist the Jesus of our misfits. I just have to be sure I squelch my human tendency to say, I told you so!

PAUL PIERLOTT

Pennsauken, New Jersey

Thank you for that article. It was oddly "refreshing" to hear a Catholic priest offer such perspective and insight. I know Franciscan Fr. Daniel Horan is not unique in that regard and I would hope that one day his observation would be more the norm rather than the exception.

In my lifetime of faith, I have known at least two priests who would certainly have been part of that LGBTQ community if they had been permitted to reveal their true nature. One was without a doubt the most compassionate and empathetic pastor I have ever known. The other was fastidious to a fault and frequently disrespectful of those entrusted to his care, especially altar servers. The latter would likely have

been one of those who fashioned that policy, just to punish the others who didn't endure as much as he had withstood. I find it sad that much of the church's hierarchy tends toward the latter which also seems to reflect many common elements of current conservative rhetoric.

Some organized Christian denominations have embraced not only women clergy but members of the LGBTQ community as well as pastors or parish staff. The Roman Catholic requirement for celibacy is absent. I often thought that a married clergy might be an integral part of the church's response to dwindling congregations. Observing how those Lutheran, Episcopal and Presbyterian pastors embrace inclusion while maintaining faithfulness to the Gospels creates the hope that the church might one day do the same.

I still have some reservations because of my own deep-seated prejudices but I do my best to acknowledge them when they surface and challenge myself to be better. I pray that the church will one day adopt that realization and act accordingly.

LARRY HUBER

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Franciscan Fr. Daniel Horan had an interesting article on the number of diocesan policies directed against LGBTQ persons. The decrease in affiliation for the Catholic Church is more than LGBTQ, it is also the misogynistic nature of the church (no female deacons, much less priests), treatment of people, preaching, and a clericalism one can easily see increasing today by the young traditional minded clergy. These issues have been around much longer and have failed to be addressed, so don't hold your breath for modification regarding LGBTQ.

My diocese appears to play to the 10% hardcore, doctrinaire Catholics, marginalizing many good, formerly involved faithful Catholics. Parish membership has declined since the arrival of a traditional-minded priest two years ago. He and the bishop seem to take a perverse pride in weeding out those who do not follow their strict view of Catholic doctrine. My parish priest has strongly preached against LGBTQ (leading to many leaving), criticized Jesuit Fr. James Martin, so how would he accept a change in doctrine or even altered approach to LGBTQ? He will not even allow female altar servers.

The church has been very good at emptying the pews, and many equate (confuse?) a faithful church with a doctrinaire church. The hierarchy is getting what its policies and practices have created.

THOMAS D. HOVEL

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Actually calling clerical sin "sin" and putting "sin" in the headline is an NCR first that I can recall! A few fine points to consider. Are Christian people who leave their church no longer Christians? As one who has, I argue they remain Christians if they believe the Gospel of Jesus and apply it in their lives. Shall we consider this the true definition of Christian rather than limiting it to the Sunday churchgoers who live their Christianity within the church's four walls? Broadly defined Christians are churchgoers. Narrowly defined Christians read their bible, spiritual books, pray and good works outside the four walls the media defines as needed to be "labeled" a Christian.

The author is asking that the truth of the Gospel message be shared by the educated and formed clergy with the laity not as it has been misrepresented. Yes, in fact the clergy who twist the good news to fit their personal and/or corporate agendas are sinful. In fact, as long as they persist in their sinful behavior they are in a state of perpetual sin and should act accordingly — abstain from the Eucharist. We know the criminal clerical sex abuse and cover-up pandemic is sinful, yet sin was seldom attached to the crime.

Natural law as defined by the Catholic Church does not reflect what the author calls "*fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding)." The search for God's truth ends when academic inquiry is stymied under a pontificate. We know this was the case under the sainted Pope John Paul II and his successor. It is only now beginning again under Pope Francis. When inquiry stops, error (sin) begins.

With all the darkness there are signs of hope. Francis is hard at work doing what he can to make lasting structural changes. What he can't affect, and hasn't in the

"hearts of stone" clerics is a personal metanoia.

MICHAEL J. McDERMOTT

Tyler, Texas

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