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by NCR Staff

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Guest contributor [Geraldine Gorman wrote](#) that when she reentered Catholicism, it seemed that in the decades of her absence the church had gotten much right. But not the whole gender equity thing. And that has led her to leave, once again. Following are NCR reader responses to this opinion with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

Geraldine Gorman's decision to leave the church just when there is an element of hope that its notorious and inequitable mistreatment of women through the centuries is about to be seriously addressed at the Synod leaves one with a sense of sadness but also hope and excitement for the next chapter of her spiritual journey.

Her testimony of frustrations dealing with conservative elements within her parish regarding women's issues have been suffered by many kindred spirits across the nation. These sisters in Christ would not only confirm her findings, but affirm her decision and encourage her to lean on Jesus's recommendation in Mark 6:11: "If anyone will not welcome you or heed your words, leave the place, and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." And his consolation, "I will never leave nor forsake you" (Hebrews: 13:5).

I might add that those naysayers in her former parish community are definitely the losers, many of them sadly ignorant of the workings of the spirit and the prophetic gifts that Geraldine and others like her can contribute to a holy/vigorous parish life.

As for our author, we wish her well as she enters "sacred, liminal space" and hope she knows that her articles are much appreciated and that she is very welcome in our NCR community.

NANCY MCGUNAGLE
Kalispell, Montana



Geraldine Gorman's article on how the Church's old boy hierarchy is going to consider maybe allowing women to join the diaconate reminds me of my boyhood.

My nine- and 10-year-old pals and I would build hideouts and tree forts in the forest out of scrap wood and cardboard and nearly always tack a sign up somewhere close declaring, "NO GIRLS ALLOWED." I have moved on since then.

A sad shame and an outrageous insult that the old boys have not.

PETER MANNING

Port Coquitlam, British Columbia

Gorman's article describes a significant brokenness that exists in the church today. It's the story of so many women (and men) who love the church and have worked diligently and appropriately to help establish God's realm on Earth only to meet resistance from the church they love.

Gorman's devotion to the church is impressive. She names the qualities of the church that draw her into participation.

Just as clearly, she names that which pushes her away from the church: the magisterial refusal to consider "women's equal and full participation." She identifies a hierarchy that remains "frozen. Intransigent. Unyielding. Unhearing."

There is sadness in her departing the church. Yet, as a mother of two daughters, and grandmother to two granddaughters, she knows the truth of "a loving and equitable God." Integrity guides her steps.

Gorman's story is both inspiring and heartbreaking, one that needs to be heard. But what about those who have walked away whose stories we have not heard? Shouldn't we ask, "Why have you left? How have we failed you?" What might they tell us about "a new way of being church?"

Gorman describes the cry of the women the church has lost as "evanescent as the sound of one hand clapping." However, what some now hear is like the raucous cheering of the crowd on the day Jesus humbly entered Jerusalem.

On that day, the Pharisees (hierarchy) told Jesus to rebuke the disciples (women). Jesus said to them, "I tell you, even if these were silent, the stones themselves would cry out" (Luke 19:40).

GREGORY M. CORRIGAN
Wilmington, Delaware

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In response to Geraldine Gorman's article, "What is the sound of a woman leaving the church?", we would like to tell her and anyone else that you do not have to leave the Catholic Church. There are alternative Catholic Churches that are not the church of Rome. For example, the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (church) is dedicated to welcoming everyone as equals. We may not all have stained glass but we do have the same music and consider each other as a good family rather than just "good neighbors."

Women and men serve in the same roles of ministry. There are three equal legs (parts) of the Communion: a Council of Bishops, a House of Laity and a House of Pastors. We both are involved in the larger church as complete equals with our voices heard and our votes counted. Delores is pastor of the local church, vicar of the Southwest region of the country and member of the House of Pastors. Theresa is a monk in the Benedictines of Holy Wisdom and a member of the House of Laity. We are both divorced, gay women, re-married in one of ECC communities and mothers of seven children, grandmothers of many and great-grandmas of an ever increasing number.

The Ecumenical Catholic Communion can be home to you.

DELORES KROPF and THERESA GORLEY
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