

# The Census Form Religion Question and the Homosexual Catholic

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I feel it is important that members of the LGBT Community who are lapsed and/or unbelieving Catholics ask themselves if they want to tick the 'Roman Catholic' box in the 'Religion' section of the national census on April 10.

The consequences of one ticking the Roman Catholic box are as follows.

Firstly it assumes that one's baptism into membership of the Catholic Church was valid. Baptism is supposed to give you supernatural power to accept the Catholic faith. So, if you find that you have always been unable to do so fully then you have the right to take that as a sign that your baptism was null and void. If it works, experience will tell you. Nobody has any business assuming you are Catholic just because you were put through a baptism ceremony - its not that simple. By merely being listed as a member or listing oneself as a member, is to tacitly support the Church. To tick the box and support the Church by declaring membership is immoral when you don't believe in it - it is promoting a structure of deceit that damages people.

Ticking the 'Roman Catholic' box as a non-believer demeans yourself for you are not being true to you. It implies that Catholicism is a mere label - it is not. Catholicism claims that the Catholic religion is the most important business of all. It says there is no salvation outside the Church. It adds that there is just everlasting torment for those who do not join the religion they believe to be of God. It says the Church is not a human organisation but is set up and revealed by God.

It is Catholic teaching that God makes laws we do not understand because he alone has all knowledge and can see the benefits of these laws. It makes no sense for LGBT people to expect the Church to change its teaching against homosexuality for them. Such a move would basically be the Church showing it is a human organisation, not a divine one - it could change doctrine. It can't do that without becoming a new religion and it would not be the Church anymore. To support the Church - actively or passively - is to damage the cause of gay rights. Both religious liberals and fundamentalists believe that God knows best and that thinking is to blame for much of the harm done in the name of God.

The Catholic teaching of 'blame the sin, not the sinner' makes no sense as to blame the sin is to blame the sinner. The person is his or her sins for they show his or her character and thus, it is the character that is the problem. So it follows that to wish evil on a sin is to wish evil on a person. The doctrine of 'hate the sin' infers that the Church must do all it can to discourage disobedience to God and often does this by applying social pressure to prevent LGBT from living out their sexuality. No self-respecting gay person should support the Catholic Church in any sense. They should invent their own faith but it will not be Roman Catholic. Most people these days engage in 'DIY Spirituality' and instead of conforming to Church belief adopt 'a la carte' approach to religion, when handily helps them side-step the parts of religion that are quite obviously homophobic or misogynistic. In my opinion, it is best to do your own thing and forget about formal religion.

If you consciously abandon your Catholic faith or if it happens naturally, then you are no longer Catholic, as Church law states that apart from being baptised one must consciously embrace the Catholic faith and all its doctrine in order to be a true Catholic. Although the process of formal defection from the Catholic Church has been discontinued, Church law still recognises that one can leave the Church and cease to be Roman Catholic. If a believing Catholic converts to Protestantism, that is obviously not a sincere or genuine conversion, yet that person is no longer recognised as a Catholic. If they are not Catholics then how can the person who does not believe be Catholic even if that person goes to the sacraments and declares themselves to be Catholic? Belief is the basic requirement.

Ticking the box tells the state that you support the Church, which crucially means the State may formulate policies and laws that reflect the teachings of said Church. For example, a country could be reluctant to legalise gay marriage if it looks at the census results and sees that most have declared themselves Roman Catholic. The objective behind all the works of the Church is to bring people to believe in Catholic doctrine. To tick the Roman Catholic box is to is sanction public and official Church doctrine. That is why I, for one, will be ticking the 'No Religion' box on April 10.

And if the state ignores the Church despite most people saying they support the Church, then should it ignore the Church? If it should not, there is a principle at stake. You have called on the state not to ignore the Church. That is the principle.

## CATHOLIC AND GAY

Dear Editor, I am writing in response to the opinion piece by Patrick Gormley on the back page of GCN's last edition (Issue 256). Although I fully understand the argument he is making, regarding the conflict between the Catholic Church and a homosexual orientation, I think his piece only adds fuel to the fire. Shouldn't we be campaigning for religious tolerance rather than round rejection of religion?

Refusing to check the box on the census seems to be to be running away from the problem and not embracing your true self at all. It is only asking people to continue polarising religion and sexual orientation.

Gormley's claim that "to support the Catholic Church - actively or passively - is to damage the cause of gay rights", is just as negative as some of the Catholic hierarchy's assertions about the gay community. Gormley maintains that the state will only use information about numbers of Catholics in Ireland to "formulate policies and laws that reflect the teachings of said Church", yet even as most of the population, has statistically, identified as Catholic, Ireland has been able to move on forward in LGBT rights.

Didn't we see the first civil partnership happen? Isn't an openly gay politician campaigning for Presidential election? Don't we have two openly gay TDs in the Dail?

I acknowledge that there is so much more to be done, but Gormley's proposal seems too pessimistic. No one should have to give up their faith in order to hold on to being gay. I checked the Catholic box on the census because I identify as a Catholic. I also identify as a gay man. The two are not mutually exclusive, no matter how upset I sometimes am over statements by the Pope. My religion belongs to me, please don't ask me to sacrifice it for political reasons.

### MY REPLY TO MATT:

Matt lied that he fully understood the argument I was making. In fact he totally ignored the rational objections I have to LGBT supporters of the Church. Matt has a right to his opinion but that means it has to be really his opinion - his distorting and emotional reasoning come nothing near to a genuine honest opinion. We are about to see an example of how a pretended gay rights supporter can try to get support for a poisonous archaic bigoted institution. GCN had no right to publish such a distorted reply to my arguments in the public sphere. Matt doesn't know that if he has a right to his opinion he must take responsibility for anything that happens as a result of it. He could have misled some LGBT people to tick the Roman Catholic box. This was an abuse of that responsibility and we have the obligation not to let him away with it.

If you think you can be a true Catholic while refusing to accept the required teaching of the Church then you are prone to self-deception. Self-deception means at some level you know you are the hypocrite you are. You can only deceive yourself if you know that the beliefs are not the truth.

People like Matt pretend they are good Catholics while wilfully rejecting some teachings that go with the Church. Their hypocrisy pays homage to the Church in an indirect and oblique way. Somebody said that hypocrisy is homage to virtue. If you didn't agree with virtue, you would not feel the need to pretend to be virtuous. The real Catholics hold that as the Catholic Church alone is the religion that is right and authorised by God - the others are only right in so far as they agree with Catholicism - it is a virtue to be a believing and obedient Catholic. The hypocrites believe the same thing. They may disbelieve certain things and live in defiance of the Church, so they pretend to be true Catholics. They will not say, "I refuse to be a hypocrite and call myself a Catholic." The hypocrite indirectly supports the Church and pays homage to its required teachings. Matt is violating LGBT rights by being listed as a Church member. He goes into this violation deeper when he goes to Mass and even more so when he gives the Church money and more so again if he preaches that the Church is true and distributes its evangelistic literature.

Supporting a structure that does harm is made far more inexcusable when you do not regard that structure as teaching correct doctrine and its worsened again when the systems doctrine is an essential component of its identity. Roman Catholicism claims to be the organ of infallible and irrevocable doctrine. The structure in a sense is far more important than anything else.

We must remember that in society, discrimination is seen as objectively wrong. In other words, it wrong no matter who thinks its right. But religion claims it has the right to be exempted from discrimination laws. Even if the Church accepted LGBT people's lifestyle, the fact remains that the Church sees discrimination as a virtue - at least when it feels like discriminating.

A person like Matt who misrepresents a religion he says he is a part of is dishonest. The Catholic Church claims to be a

voluntary organisation. If he does not agree with the ethos then he should respect religious freedom and quit the Church.

You should not demean yourself by being in a denomination whose official and standard teaching you feel entitled to disobey. Disobedience is a necessary evil. But not when you can walk. Best to avoid disobedience. If you oppose the teaching and disobey you are only making yourself being seen as a hypocrite and that does not serve the cause you support in defiance of the Church. If you are not a hypocrite then nobody is. Pretending a religion is not homophobic when it requires homophobia comes across as self-deceit. The LGBT Christian can only say, "I think Christianity when correctly interpreted is not homophobic". Keep your attention on the think word. He only thinks it. What good is thinking it? Its only an opinion. He needs to KNOW it not think it. He is encouraging a faith that he thinks is not homophobic and thus he is encouraging people to think differently from him too and to opine that LGBT rights is anti-Christian. He is indirectly fuelling the resultant homophobia and being an enabler of it.

To pretend a anti-LGBT rights faith is really pro-LGBT rights is not supporting LGBT rights. A form of Christianity that pretends that Christianity is pro-LGBT equality and rights is not a real supporter of LGBT equal rights. Its only pretending after all and deluding itself. Such support will not garner credibility.

Matt's approach has the modern hypocrisy of, "You are what you claim to be even if you are not", kind of mentality. Christianity is full of it. You have atheists who see God as a symbol, and who deny that there is any creator or maker, who claim to be Christians. To describe yourself as Christian means you accept certain doctrines and standards and that is that.

## INTRODUCTION

Through GCN Magazine, I asked the LGBT community members who feel that Catholicism is an untrue religion and not from God to tick the No Religion box in the Irish Census 2011 if they feel and think that in honesty they are not Catholic with a view to taking a stance in favour of LGBT rights. A letter writer called Matt has taken issue with that reasonable request. There are always blind zealots who are immune to commonsense.

MATT: "I am responding to the opinion piece".

As we will see, it is not a response to it. Its a response to your distortion of the piece.

It is not up to you to decide if the piece was an opinion piece. That depends on how logical it is. I see the piece as communicating facts not opinions. Opinions are what you think is the case but which is open to dispute. To say what somebody knows to be right is just their opinion is a form of undermining them and what they say. Its a tactic used by liberal Christians all the time. Opinions have no binding force. For example, consider this. If it is my opinion that  $2 + 2 = 5$  and if it is yours that  $2 + 2 = 4$  then we must agree to disagree. We must permit the disagreement and respect it. How can life function with an outlook like that where one has no firm beliefs and claims to know nothing and worse of all that permits any old rubbish?

No true follower of Christianity takes the view, "I've a right to my religious opinions". That is a form of relativism that teaches that we can be sure of nothing are are only left with opinions. The pope continually condemns such relativism. Christianity claims to be a body of revealed truth not a collection of opinions. Those who think its a collection of opinions are saying its just another man-made faith. If they claim to be Christians they are claiming what is false. They are actually agreeing with the atheists and religious sceptics that Christianity is not a monolith of divine truth but of mere human speculation.

Relativism is behind the notion that people like Matt have that you can embrace the Catholic faith and reject parts of the faith and still be a true believer. This is ridiculous. It is like, "I trust you but....". If Matt wants to be seen as that sneaky then let him be seen as it.

MATT: "I fully understand the argument he is making"

Matt that is an out and out lie. You have not tried to rationally answer the points I made but you ignored them. For example, I exposed the deception of the Church hypocrisy that says hate and blame the sin not the sinner. There is no sneakier form of hatred than that. It makes the hater come across as good and charming. Its the clever way to hate and promote hatred. You passed over that. Hope you take responsibility for the harm you did to impressionable gay youngsters who read your letter. Also, you don't understand Catholic doctrine. Its Jesus taught that valuing God comes before valuing people. That sets Christianity against humanitarianism. It is stupid of LGBT people to think, "The Catholic faith is about justice so if its against LGBT rights its wrong." It is silly to expect a religion that isn't humanitarian to respect LGBT rights. Even if it were to grant them its allowing would lack credibility for its allowing it for humanitarian reasons when it is not a humanitarian religion. Its only paving the way for fundamentalism.

You have not said if your attachment to the Church is essentially motivated by a need to belong and get good feelings from it or if you really have true faith and have considered the evidence for Christianity. Is your position about sentiment or truth? Your argument does not involve any real thinking but shows how you just care about what you want, not what is true. That is not about freedom of speech. If a person calls something a view when they feel it and don't think it they are lying to other people. Its not a view but a feeling. Freedom of speech is about freedom to express views not to disguise feelings as views. It is not about lies.

While you get your religious pleasures and use the Roman Catholic crutch, millions of LGBT people suffer tremendous damage because they were born into the Church.

It is bad enough to stay in a homophobic organisation when you really think that that organisation is God's Church. But to stay in it for sentimental or emotional reasons is disgraceful. It is really using the Church when the Church is not about having people who style themselves as members because of emotional or social reasons. Besides, the Church is not about using doctrine to make people feel good about helping them to believe and remain believing doctrines that are said to be the truth. Your support of the Church is not real support at all. If a person really supports an organisation, that person will not work against or protest against its official teaching and especially when that organisation claims to be an infallible teacher guided by God. All the person that does this is really trying to do is go apply pressure so that it will give up its identity. He or she by claiming to be a member is really misrepresenting the meaning and teaching of that religion.

Intuition and instinct tell us that we should not be in an organisation that stands for what is against our highest principles. Matt feels this which is why he needs to resort to exaggeration and distortion to debunk the article.

MATT: "his piece only adds fuel to the fire"

To suggest that my piece adds fuel to the fire is just stupid. We can't add fuel to a fire that the Church has lit and that it will keep burning. If any gay fuel fuels the fire it is because the Church wants it to and makes sure it keeps the heat on.

Gay people leaving the Church are not adding fuel to the fire because the Church itself says they have the right to go when they see that their lifestyles do not fit the Church.

Would Matt agree with, "There will be no fire unless both the LGBT community keep it going and the Church keeps it going too. It takes the two sides." Matt then wants the LGBT community not to add fuel to it but what is he doing about the Church fuelling the fire? What he is doing is saying the Catholic Church is the right religion which undermines his alleged support for LGBT people, and giving it money, supporting its worship which would not take place if people stayed in the house and rationalising away the truth that the Church is guilty of homophobia in its refusal to bless and encourage same sex relationships. He does that by saying the pope and bishops are too negative as if their condemnations are not part of the Catholic faith! He has no Bible verses for us or statements from the Virgin Mary of Medjugorje saying that its not a sin to have gay sex. He deceitfully wants us to take his word for it that its not a sin and that he knows God's mind better than the Roman Catholic theological experts. He clearly does not know much about what he calls his religion but has the nerve to pontificate as if he does. He wants Catholicism to become like every other religion that will change doctrine if the pressure is big enough.

The Church takes the money off the people and the people give it primarily because they want support in the difficulties of life from the Church. And so the Church should be a democracy but is not. A gay person giving the Church money needs to think about his or her self-respect.

Let's think again about the fire. Most people are not good obedient Catholics. Many are Catholic in name only for you need to accept the Catholic faith to be a true Catholic. Without belief, you may behave like a Catholic but you are not one inside. Jesus said that those who do not believe are not disciples of his. A doubter can only be a Catholic if he or she doesn't deliberately have the doubt and if he or she confesses it as a fault or something that should not be.

It is the few real Catholics who will get burnt. The fire is hardly worth worrying about.

A statement like "his piece only adds fuel to the fire" is narrow and bigoted. It cannot "only" add fuel to the fire. It is not totally bad even if it is wrong. And it is not wrong for if an LGBT person does not believe they are Catholic in all honesty any more they must tick the 'No Religion' box to state that and take a stand for LGBT rights. How can having principles be wrong? And principles can lead to trouble but we cannot just shelve them. Even if my approach causes problems, it might do enough good to justify tolerating those problems. Each LGBT person must weigh the risks and problems and look for solutions to as many of the problems as possible. If a Church gets more bigoted and homophobic if LGBT people exercise their right to leave it, then no self-respecting LGBT person would contemplate staying in such a Church.

If my approach is mistaken, LGBT people who share my approach and find problems have the responsibility to address

those problems.

You admit there is a fire. Why don't you make a run for the fire escape?

Most Catholics care little for religious matters. It is the Catholics, mainly in the priesthood and the hierarchy, who care enough to try and stop LGBT rights that will feel the heat. You must be very concerned about them! I have had no bad reaction at all as a result of separating from the Church as I still mix with the Catholic community and engage in charity work on its behalf. Have you heard of amicable separations?

Your money helps to ensure the Church gets the world and the state's attention. By paying money to the Church you give it the means and power to fight LGBT equal rights with heterosexuals. The Church uses the power you give it to halt gay marriages and to create a climate of persecution and discrimination when it can. You are helping the dedicated Catholics to light the fire and to damn LGBT people in that fire.

Merely letting yourself be seen as a member gives the Church power too.

Until what you say is your Church stops trying to force membership on babies against Article 20, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "No one may be compelled to belong to an association" and claiming the right to educate them that homosexuality is wrong don't you dare talk to me about adding fuel. You are part of this recruitment regime at least indirectly.

Homophobia is strong enough in society without people supporting, through at least being a part of, a religion that adds to it. What about that for fuelling the fire?

The law merely says that if a couple is suitable for raising a child, they have the right to be considered if they apply to adopt. That is commonsense. The Church says gay people are not suitable persons. But even if that were true, it would be unfair to ban adoption simply on the basis that they are gay. If no gay couples are suitable, the law has to provide for the hypothetical gay couple that is suitable. Anything else is bigoted homophobia.

The Catholic Church processed adoptions and got good parents for many children. Many nations have legalised gay adoption. Very few children would be given to gay couples. When the law banned the Church from discriminating against gay couples, the Church closed down the adoption agencies. The Church unjustly blamed the law for these closures. It chose to leave many children uncared for before it would permit a tiny minority to go to gay couples. It did that because it never cared about the children in the first place. It was all about doing good not for the sake of the children but for the sake of making the religion look desirable.

Matt, support the LGBT community if they leave or even oppose the Church for they can never add fuel to the fire - who has lit the fire? Who has fuelled it?