

REVISED LETTER - NOT PUBLISHED - AN APPEAL TO LGBT NON-PRACTICING CATHOLICS TO TICK NO RELIGION BOX

The 2011 Census will be held Sunday 10 April 2011.

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 No Religion box.

The views of the individual Catholic who disagrees with the Church are not the views of the Church. It is dishonest to claim to be a believing Catholic when you pick and choose what you want to believe.

Ticking Roman Catholic on the form says GOVERNMENT, TREAT ME AS A CATHOLIC, AS A BELIEVING CATHOLIC. Thus Church teaching then must override anything else. If you want the choice of using contraception, you have given up that right by ticking Roman Catholic for a Roman Catholic does not believe in contraception. If you disagree with a religion then do not join it unless the teaching is open to change. The Catholic Church is not open to change. If it were, it would be just like nearly every other religion that feels it can alter doctrines. It would lose its attraction for those who simply admire the putative unchangeableness of Catholic teaching despite its changing discipline. It is the principle. Suppose a country is not secularist. If most people in the country claim to be Catholic, then as they are not the teachers of the church or the shepherds but they are the sheep, then the government should take their claim to be Catholic as consenting to the bishops being consulted in state matters. We all consent and give tacit consent to things that we may not like.

The consequences of lapsed and/or unbelieving Catholics ticking the Roman Catholic box are as follows:

It assumes that one's baptism into membership of the Catholic Church was valid. Catholic teaching is that a priest can withhold intention to give the sacrament and go through the motions meaning the person is not really baptised at all in the eyes of God. The Church will not recognise a baptism if it can be shown that the priest was only play-acting. Some priests are secret unbelievers which means they may not intend the rite of baptism to work.

Baptism is supposed to give you supernatural power to accept the Catholic faith. 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 yourself as a member, is the minimal way of supporting 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 hurts people. Some people give a lot to the Church and find out to their horror that it is just a human organisation kidding itself that it is from God. Think of them. Ticking demeans yourself for you are not being true to you or to those who love you. It assumes 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, the one true Church. It says the Church is not a human organisation but is set up and revealed by God so whoever is against it or will not support it is against God.

The Catholic structure - communications infrastructure - is what works to endanger LGBT rights. To defect from the Church, to give it no money and to stay away from its services are things that are necessary to damage it or work towards getting rid of it. One day, when HIV becomes worse among gay men than it already is the Church will say, "They didn't have to have sex and contract this disease. We urge the state to prioritise funding for cancer patients etc who have not got sick through their own fault. There is not enough money to go around." Repudiating the Church is a matter of life and death.

It makes no sense us LGBT people to expect the Church to change its teaching against homosexuality for us. The Church would be saying it is a mere human organisation if it could change doctrine. It can't do that without becoming a new religion and it would not be the Church anymore. It will have to excise a lot of the Bible to please not just LGBT people but those in the Church who have problems with other teachings. To support the Church is to try and damage the cause of gay rights.

People who pick and choose out of a book like the Bible that they say is authored by God are deluding themselves that they really believe in it. They really believe in themselves for they decide what is to be picked out. Those who do that and who do it with Church teaching are not Catholic believers. Even if they are Catholic they are not Catholic believers.

LGBT people are not heads of the Church. It is not their job to teach Church doctrine (only to repeat what they have been taught by the authorities). That is the job of the bishops and the Pope who is the head of the Church. Catholics are expected to learn at their feet and pass on what they teach. To differ from them in matters of faith and doctrine is to try and misrepresent the faith. If you don't agree with the faith then go. Find another faith or found your own version of Catholicism. Don't be like a person who claims to be a Muslim but who says the Koran is satanic. Be honest. It is not up to you to make up the rules and laws of the Roman Catholic Church. Period.

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. Both liberals and fundamentalists believe that God knows best. That dangerous idea is to blame for much of the harm done in the name of God. It is naive to think that just because we might not see anything wrong with homosexuality the Church shouldn't either and may change one day. It overlooks the fact that though the Church gives reasons for its crusade against homosexuality, the decisive reason is that the Church's scriptures and traditions forbid it. Even if the Church were to permit homosexuality, the notion that God must tell us what is right and what is wrong continues to undermine gay rights. Why? Because it takes the focus away from what people want and need and directs it to what is revealed. It becomes a case of "I know because God, the Pope or the Bible tells me so and I don't care if I am wrong". It provides homophobes with an excuse for saying homosexuality is bad and gravely sinful. Every religion should be formulated in such a way that no harm is done should it prove to be wrong. In other words, religion should be as human-centred as possible. The excuse is so dangerous for it states the matter is not up for debate. Unbelievers who say are against homosexuality can look at the matter in the light of reason and evidence. The believer's mind is closed for he does not care enough about people to be fair.

The Church's teaching against homosexuality is not the only problem with the Church. The ban on sex outside marriage and without love denigrates people for whom it is natural to engage in sex solely for pleasure. It accuses them of doing harm when many can testify that this lifestyle is the best thing about life. Also, the claim that even wilful lustful thoughts are gravely sinful and will put you in Hell forever if you die is clearly harsh and uncaring. It is at least implicit homophobia. Nobody should want to be part of such a religion. The Church says that wearing scanty clothes makes you a sex object. It is not that simple. It is more complex than that. The Church harms gay people through its indirect teachings as well as its direct teachings. It is over-simplifying to think that the problem is merely Church opposition to gay sex. Matt treats the Church attitude to gay people and its refusal as a Church to support gay relationships as a problem. That is insulting. It is not a problem. It is worse than that. You do not describe racism or warmongering as problems unless you have clear unmistakable evidence that a resolution is possible and not in years but sooner. Matt has no evidence that Catholic teaching can and will change soon. The Church will not reconcile gay sex to its teaching for that suggests that fitting gay sex in matters more than the teaching. The whole Church doctrine of the sinfulness of contraception and divorce would have to be abandoned with acceptance of gay sex.

The Church approves of the teaching of Herbert McCabe O.P. that not realising that you are sinning is a sin itself. This makes a sinister insinuation against gay people who are confident that they are good people. The Church says people in Hell put themselves in Hell forever and its nothing to do with God - to accuse people of being capable of being that evil is itself scandalous. Where is the proof? Without the proof there is no way to describe the teaching but as hate speech.

The Catholic teaching of blame the sin and not the sinner (love sinner and hate sin means the same thing) makes no sense. To blame the sin is to blame the sinner. The person is his or her sins for they show his or her character and its the character that is the problem. To wish evil on a sin is to wish evil on a person. And its vindictive to ever wish evil on anything or anybody. The doctrine of hate the sin infers that the Church must do all it can to discourage disobedience to its God. For example, social pressure must be applied to prevent LGBT from living out their sexuality. No self-respecting gay person would 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. Instead of conforming to Church belief in its fullness they pick and choose but their real faith is in the many self-help books out there. It is best to do your own thing and forget about formal religion.

The Catholic faith condemns harmless sexual acts outside of marriage such as mutual masturbation as grave sins. This proves the Church cannot say it hates the sin because it hurts the sinner!

If you consciously try to get rid of your Catholic faith or let it happen, then you are no longer Catholic. Church law says that you have to be baptised - even a Protestant baptism would do - and you have to consciously embrace the Catholic faith and all its doctrine as true to be Catholic.

The process of formal defection from the Catholic Church has been discontinued. However, 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 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 meaning the state may formulate policies and laws that reflect the teachings of the 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.

It is because people let their names be kept on the Church's member rolls that the Church seems so big and because of its seeming size it gets away with things it shouldn't. For example, John Paul II should have been in prison clothes for his refusal to help the clerical sex abuse victims of his priests and bishops. The seeming size is the reason society does not feel the revulsion to the level that we would expect. The Church gets away with crimes because of its size and society helps in this by having too many warm feelings for the Church. The seeming size is responsible for the power of the Church. If you care about human rights you will amend this.

It is Catholic teaching that since Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all one's powers and that the second greatest is love of neighbour that humanitarianism, goodness to people for their sake only, is a sin. You are to serve others not for their own sake but for God's. This repudiates the common sense notion that religion should teach doctrines that if they prove false no harm is done. For example, it is not right to upset people by saying they should be at Mass every Sunday. Let people do what they want and if the Mass is hocus-pocus then it won't matter.

The objective behind all the works of the Church is to bring people to believe in Catholic doctrine. That is why the vitriol and the authoritarianism have been toned down in recent years - its a game to keep the pews from being emptied. I would not like to think that people around me were being kind to me more for God's sake than mine! It shows that rather than seek to change the Church, it should be abandoned for its essential doctrine is toxic.

To tick the Roman Catholic box is to is sanction public and official Church doctrine. Also, LGBT people are betraying LGBT rights in a graver way by financially helping the Church.

Please read this letter again. Assist LGBT rights by doing what is true to yourself. Good luck.