

# Pro-abortion and Catholic? Sorry, you don't have that 'choice'

By Nathanael Blake

"Now, a word to Catholics who would follow the dictates of their consciences instead of the dictates of the Vatican. Congratulations, you're Protestant. Practice your singing," Florence King once wrote in *National Review*.

As a proud Protestant, I'm not bothered by disagreement with Catholic doctrines, though I do wish more people would be honest about what that means. I disagree with the Roman Church on some major points. And I hold to the traditional view that when you belong to a church, you should accept its beliefs. Thus, I am not a Catholic.

As a matter of simple honesty, anyone who has a principled difference with the Catholic Church on key doctrines shouldn't call him or herself Catholic. I find that I can bear the deprivation quite cheerfully, but there seems no shortage of folks determined to reach out for the Eucharist with one hand while offering the Vatican an obscene gesture with the other.

## 'Choice' and contradiction

On abortion the Church is unequivocal; the Catechism of the Catholic Church says:

Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception... Since the first century the Church has affirmed

the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable... Formal cooperation in an abortion constitutes a grave offense. The Church attaches the canonical penalty of excommunication to this crime against human life.

Yet many, especially politicians, insist that they are both Catholic and "pro-choice."

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From Mario Cuomo to John Kerry, they have generally proclaimed that while they are personally opposed to abortion, they are unwilling to translate that into legislative action. But abortion is only objectionable because it is the killing of a human being, and if it is that, government has a stern duty to prohibit it. For a lawmaker to proclaim that something is murder and yet support keeping it legal—and even government-funded—displays such wickedness that all the horrors Dante's imagination concocted in *The Inferno*

seem insufficient punishment.

It may be better for one's soul to be an atheistic fallen-away Catholic than to remain in the Catholic Church receiving Communion while unrepentantly endorsing grave sins such as abortion. It is for the protection of the sinner's soul that Canon Law 915 says, "Those who have been excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty and others obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to Holy Communion."

For as the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians:

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

I disagree with the Catholic Church on some points, but I presume that it means what it says. That's more than can be said for "Catholics" who insist on defying the Church while acting as though they are in good standing.

## The image of God

It could be said, I suppose, that unfaithful Catholics are already honorary Protestants, but many of us don't want them either. Sure, they might fit in with some Protestant denominations, but those are dying off like refugees that rely on the UN to protect them from genocide. The Protestant churches that are attracting members are those that still believe in doctrines like the virgin birth and resurrection of Christ. And to be fair, the Catholic parishes that are growing are those that uphold the faith.

It is this shared orthodoxy that had led to the increasing rapprochement between Catholics and Evangelicals. I doubt I'll be able to stir up much enthusiasm for a Reformation Day office party here at American Life League, but the acrimony between traditional Protestants and Catholics has greatly decreased of late. For amid our doctrinal disagreements there is much we agree upon and important among those is the *imago Dei*, the belief that man is created in the image of God. Christianity cannot survive without this concept,

### *Spiritual energizer*

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, then, is the sin committed by the person who claims to have a right to persist in evil—in any sin at all—and who thus rejects redemption.

—Dominum et Vivificantum  
Pope John Paul II

for upon it rests most of our doctrines.

It provides both for our dignity and our humility. As free moral agents possessing immortal souls, we have a value that outstrips the entire material universe. But as created beings, we are dependent upon our Creator, Whom we are to worship. Therefore we see our proper role and why Christ chose to die that we might be saved from the consequences of our sins. This doctrine provides for the sanctity of each human being upon which Christianity rests.

Because human beings are not merely created by God, but also share in His image, human life is sacrosanct and can only be taken in exceptional circumstances such as self defense. Innocent human life is never to be intentionally targeted, no matter how convenient such a killing may be.

## Padding the pews

Christianity is simply incompatible with abortion. So-called progressive Christians, whether Catholic or Protestant, who bloviate about "social justice" while supporting abortion cannot sustain their position. It is ridiculous to say that Christian ethics require economic equality or universal health care while demanding that it be legal to murder the smallest and weakest human beings.

Given the more diffuse and, in some cases, nonexistent hierarchies among Protestant denominations, it is vaguely plausible to claim to be a pro-choice Protestant, though that would require ignoring clear biblical doctrines such as the commandment "Do not murder." But the Catholic Church has specifically codified its opposition to abortion and to be Catholic means placing oneself under the authority of the Magisterium. Being a "pro-choice Catholic" is like an American soldier fighting for the Taliban.

Catholic bishops who refuse to challenge pro-abortion public Catholics have saved us from having to officially welcome "pro-choice" Catholics into the Protestant fold. Of course when Catholic leaders seemingly ignore the Church's rules, it is more difficult for Protestants to take seriously the Catholic claim that it is the one true Church. But if some prelates want to try and pad their ranks by keeping a bunch of people who are members in name only, it's no theses off my reformation.

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