

IT'S TIME TO QUIT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



OPEN LETTER TO 'LIBERAL' AND 'NOMINAL' CATHOLICS

It's your moment of truth.

* Will it be reproductive freedom, or back to the Dark Ages? Do you choose women and their rights, or Bishops and their wrongs? Whose side are you on?

* In light of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops' declaration of war against women's right to contraception...

* Why are you aiding and abetting a church that has repeatedly engaged in a crusade to ban contraception, abortion and sterilization, to deny the right of all women everywhere, Catholic or not, to decide whether and when to become mothers?

* Think of the acute misery, poverty, needless suffering, unwanted pregnancies, social evils and deaths that can be laid directly at the door of your church's pernicious doctrine that birth control is a sin and must be outlawed.

* If you imagine you can change the church from within — get it to lighten up on birth control, gay rights, marriage equality, embryonic stem-cell research — you're deluding yourself. By remaining a "good Catholic," you are doing "bad" to women's rights.

* **It's a disgrace** that U.S. health care reform is being held hostage to your church's irrational opposition to medically prescribed contraception. No political candidate should have to genuflect before the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. President Obama has compromised, but the Church that would turn back the clock 2,000 years never budges. Instead it is launching a ruthless Inquisition. Every Sunday from the tax-free pulpit you're being lobbied against the Administration's contraceptive policy.

* Your church hysterically claims that secular medical policy is "an assault against religious liberty." The louder the Church cries "offense against religious liberty" the harder it works to take away women's liberty. Your church insists it has the right to inflict its ban on contraception. As columnist Katha Pollitt points out, Jehovah's Witnesses aren't demanding the right of private employers to deny blood transfusions. Now your church has introduced into Congress a double-speak bill, "Respect for Rights of Conscience Act," to allow dogma to trump the civil rights and private consciences of employees.

* The Church that hasn't persuaded you to shun contraception now wants to use the force of secular law to deny birth control to non-Catholics.

* **Why put up** with an institution that won't put up with women priests, which excludes half of humanity? Why send your children to parochial schools to be indoctrinated into the next generation of obedient donors and voters? Can't you see how misplaced your loyalty is after two decades of sex scandals involving preying priests, church complicity, collusion and coverup going all the way to the top? Apparently, you're like the battered woman who, after being beaten down every Sunday, feels she has no place else to go.

There is a more welcoming home for you!!

Join those of us who put humanity above dogma. As Thomas Paine observed: "My own mind is my own church." We invite you to free yourself from incense-fogged ritual, from ideas uttered long ago by ignorant men, from blind obedience to an illusory religious authority.

* As a member of the "flock" of an avowedly antidemocratic club, isn't it time you vote with your feet? **Please, exit en Mass.**

Very truly,

Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker Co-Presidents

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