

Focus on Faith

How would you react to the following situation? You are reading the *New York Times* when you come upon a full page ad with the headline “An Open Letter to Pope John Paul II.”

The letter begins with “Dear Pope John Paul II” – no “Your Holiness” or “Most Holy Father,” just “Dear Pope,” Then the text says, “As faithful Catholics...” Now whenever I see, “As faithful Catholics,” I brace myself for the most traditional entreaties – bring back Latin, reverse that girl altar server decision, support Mother Angelica’s TV network, trust *The Wanderer*, that sort of thing.

Not these faithful Catholics. They want the pope to abandon 2000 years of church teaching on the sacrament of matrimony and its ends.

They think the Church should endorse this statement: “Respect for human dignity demands that we recognize the beauty and goodness of sexual intimacy in committed relationships whether or not they are open to offspring.”

(Imagine the vistas that will open up to us when the Holy Father gets as faithful as these folks – we’ll have committed same sex unions, committed polygamy, committed adultery, and don’t forget committed incest. You too, can be on the Donahue show.

(William F. Buckley had a great response to this: “Some of my best friends are committed fornicators.”)

The open letter went on, “Couples have found that various forms of contraception enhance their mutual satisfaction and caring in sexual love; Vatican opposition devalues this love.”

Sanctification? Eureka! We’ve found it – the Eighth Sacrament – and in an ad in the *New York Times*! Artificial contraception

is a means of grace...film at 11!

This letter from faithful Catholics builds to the following crescendo: "Because of the human pain caused by Vatican opposition to contraception, because such opposition severely worsens our global crisis of population and resources and because the majority of good Catholic s- after long and careful reflection – have rejected it, we say to you simply: on the issue of contraception you are wrong."

Whew! The pope really needed to get this message, especially since it came from faithful Catholics – I would hate to see what kind of Valentines he gets from unfaithful Catholics.

And just who are these faithful Catholics? Among them are Catholics for a Free Choice, Conference for Catholic Lesbians, Dignity/USA, New Ways Ministries, the Women's Ordination Conference and Catholics Speak Out.

Since I don't think the Holy Father is likely to respond to these faithful Catholics directly – after all, causing human pain is a full-time job – I would like to fill in for him, drawing upon one of the pope's previous statements.

Right here in Los Angeles, on September 16, 1987, Pope John Paul met with all the U.S. Bishops – presumably, faithful Catholics – at Our Lady Queen of Angels Seminary.

He said, "It is sometimes reported that large number of Catholics today do not adhere to the teaching of the church on a number of questions, notably sexual and conjugal morality, divorce and remarriage.

"Some are reported as not accepting the church's clear position on abortion. It has *also* been noted that there is a tendency on the part of some Catholics to be selective in their adherence to the Church's moral teachings.

"It is sometimes claimed that dissent from the magisterium is

totally compatible with being a 'good Catholic' and poses no obstacle to the reception of the sacraments.

"This is a grave error..."

So, all you faithful Catholics who think the pope is wrong, do me a favor. Think what you want, say what you want, write what you want. Just don't clutter my line for Communion!

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