

Kerry Kennedy Catholics

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A Pew survey recently revealed that no religion has lost more adherents, proportionately speaking, than Catholicism. That may be true, but it is also true that no other religion is beset with more ex-patriots who refuse to walk out the exit door. They prefer to hang out. Psychologically, that is.

Kerry Kennedy, daughter of Robert F. Kennedy, is an expert on such matters. Her book, *Being Catholic Now*, is chock full of tales from ex-Catholics, and those with one foot out the door, that would make the heads of practicing Catholics spin. And not just them. Few non-Catholics would recognize these people as Catholic. Oh, yes, included in her book are some genuine, practicing Catholics. But they are not as much fun to read about as the malcontents who dominate her work.

These men and women, all of whom were raised Catholic, cannot stop thinking of themselves as Catholics. Take Kennedy. She disagrees with the Catholic Church on immigration, contemporary interpretations of the just war doctrine, the role of women in the Church, homosexuality, birth control, abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research, etc. And so do most of the authors in her book. When asked why she chose to title her book *Being Catholic Now*, Kennedy said the other title she was thinking about was *We Are All Good Catholics*. Revealing.

I like steaks. That's why I don't call myself a vegetarian. Now consider this: Suppose I were to tell vegetarians that despite my fondness for dry-aged steaks, I consider myself to be a vegetarian. In all likelihood, they might conclude that I was hallucinating. Or simply delirious. Perhaps they would call 911. Who could blame them?

Why anyone would persist in identifying himself with a group that he manifestly rejects is an interesting psychological question. More important, however, is the fact that self-identification is not all that matters: What matters is whether those who are members in good standing accept as a colleague those who reject the tenets of their group.

Don't these Kennedy Catholics understand that they are not the final arbiters of their religious identification? We make that decision, and by we I mean practicing Catholics who accept the teachings of the Magisterium. Frankly, their opinion counts about as much as a steak-eating "vegetarian's" opinion counts in the real world.

What's bugging the malcontents? The usual stuff. The book describes the angry Irish author, Frank McCourt, as someone who "no longer follows the Catholic faith." Similarly, actor Gabriel Byrne "is no longer a practicing Catholic." Ex-priest James Carroll, who regularly maligns the Catholic Church, says "My beloved Roman Catholic tradition is full of things I reject." Bill Maher is boastfully identified as someone who has "consistently been listed in the Catholic League's Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism." Some are not well known. Ingrid Mattson made the cut despite (because of?) the fact that she is president of the Islamic Society of North America. Her scarf, wrapped around her head, looks nice.

"Throughout her career," the introductory note says, "[Susan] Sarandon has promoted progressive causes, including gay, transgender, and transsexual rights." In her own words, Sarandon expresses her nostalgia for times past. "I loved the incense. I loved the whole spectacle of it." It's just the teachings she objects to. Anne Burke, who previously said that accused priests should not be given due process rights, is also in the book. Andrew Sullivan is introduced as an "HIV-positive, gay, libertarian." Not just gay, but "HIV-positive."

Catholic feminists, we have long known, are more feminist than

Catholic. This book is loaded with them. Anna Quindlen, the only type of Catholic the *New York Times* will ever hire as a columnist, protests against what she calls the Church's "gynecological theology." Sister Joan Chittister tells us that when she decided to junk her habit, she posed the question, "Are you or are you not a Benedictine in the bathtub?" Sister Laurie Brink is angry that she cannot advocate women's ordination at the seminary where she teaches, and Nancy Pelosi and Cokie Roberts both see the priesthood through the lens of power, not spirituality.

Most of these people are pro-abortion and some, like the late Father Robert Drinan, have been known to defend the legality of partial-birth abortion. Some like bestiality. Correction: They would like it if cats and dogs could consent. Here is what actor Dan Aykroyd says: "I'd embrace gay and lesbian priests, because I don't believe homosexuality is immoral. I draw the line at bestiality because it's unfair to the dog or the cat. If the dog or the cat had consciousness, then that'd be OK with me. Sexuality has nothing to do with morality." Warning: Don't leave Fido with this guy when you go away for a weekend.

Reared Catholic, these so-called progressives are the most reactionary persons in our society—they are stuck in neutral, unable to move forward. They simply can't find it within themselves to admit that it just didn't work out. That would be the manly thing to do, but manliness is not one of their notable virtues.