

PENNSYLVANIA PRIESTS PROTEST BIGOTRY

The *Pocono Record* is a newspaper in Northeast Pennsylvania that may not be distinguished by its circulation, but it certainly is distinguished by its vitriolic attacks on the Catholic Church. A recent editorial took direct aim at the Church blaming it for AIDS. It was one of the more irresponsible editorials we've seen. Fortunately, area priests responded in a professional manner with a letter to the editor and the newspaper printed it.

The newspaper took grave exception to the Church's position that abstinence is the only sure way to protect against AIDS. This was labeled "ridiculous, impractical and unkind." Then the editorial began its lecture, saying "People have sex. All the time. They don't want to have babies as a result and they certainly don't want to catch diseases when they're having it." In other words, don't tell men and women to act responsibly, they prefer to engage in irresponsible behavior and don't want any consequences.

Branding the teaching of abstinence "the final solution" (take that survivors of Auschwitz!), the editorial ends by indulging in a bit of good-old fashioned Catholic bashing. It says that sex is "so natural that even those sworn to forego it—some Catholic priests, for one example—have been known to violate their holiest vows to engage in it."

Here's how 11 priests answered the editorial (we are grateful to Father Tom McLaughlin for sharing it with us):

"On November 8th of this year your editorial directed itself to matters of the moral teaching of the Catholic Church. Most specifically a teaching related to the sacred nature of life. The tragic nature of a disease such as AIDS affects all humanity, and the Catholic Church was among the first to open

hospital doors, clinics and care homes for those suffering and dying. This work still continues today even as victims live longer and healthier lives—we pray and work as we can for an end to this disease.

“We stand in defense of the right of the Catholic Church to speak clearly its moral teaching to all of its members and to share its teaching with the world. The teaching in question, regarding abstinence from sexual activity does have a 100% success rate. A fact you affirm in you editorial. You label this accurate fact to be ‘ridiculous, impractical an unkind.’

“A great many of the moral issues facing men and women today present immense challenges. At times our decisions about war and peace, justice and poverty, homelessness, disease and family stability are among the most difficult to resolve.

“Facts and information help us to properly form our consciences and thus help us to render better decisions. Facts which are both true and correct ought to be considered by all. The Catholic Church has the right and responsibility to speak. The Church has a duty to be a real part of the dialogue which shapes a better society and a more responsible world. It cannot do so silent from that which is true.

“The logic advanced in your editorial speaks a sad commentary upon our society. If we are so uncontrolled as to not be able to abstain from sex even for ‘days’ as your editorial implies, we are indeed in need of a true and guiding light. Your editorial language seems more reflective of addictive behaviors than ones freely chosen.

“Like all aspects of life, our sexual gift is a beautiful one. The expression of true and faithful love is dignified, good and wondrous. We need to convey to all its beauty and we do so by not lowering the value of one’s sexuality to an uncontrolled act. It has intrinsic value which needs to be uplifted.

“The right to speak is essential, a freedom guaranteed by our nation’s law and principles. Your editorial seemed to suggest that only voices in accord with your own were able to address this issue with meaning and real purpose. The voice which is both true and correct needs to be heard by all who face serious moral choices, to deny this right is to deny the freedoms we cherish and diminish our common calling to make our world an ever better reflection of the love of our Creator.”

<i>Rev. Thomas McLaughlin St. Luke’s Church</i>	<i>Msgr. John Bergamo St. Matthew’s Church</i>	<i>Rev. Richard Czachor Our Lady of Victory</i>
<i>Rev. John Boyle Our Lady of the Lake</i>	<i>Rev. William McCawley Queen of Peace Church</i>	<i>Rev. Al Vito St. Bernadette’s Church</i>
<i>Rev. Michael Klonton Saint Ann’s Church</i>	<i>Rev. Henry Zapatocki Pastor Emeritis</i>	<i>Msgr. Arthur Kashenbach St. Mary’s Church</i>
<i>Rev. Robert Arnold Saint Rita’s Church</i>	<i>Rev. Carmen Perry St. Luke’s Church</i>	