

PRESBYTERIANS WELCOME GAY CLERGY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the decision by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to welcome practicing homosexuals as candidates for ordination:

We knew that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was in trouble when it had to pass an amendment to its Constitution in 1997 affirming its teachings on ordination: married couples were expected to practice “fidelity” and single clergy were supposed to practice “chastity.” The fact that such a staple of Christianity was a matter of debate suggested that it was just a matter of time before it was jettisoned. After all, if the biblical injunction proscribing homosexuality can be ignored, why should the sexual practices of the clergy matter?

The Presbyterian Church now joins the United Church of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and the Episcopal Church in allowing practicing homosexuals and lesbians to become members of the clergy. It also has something else in common with these mainline Protestant denominations: it is collapsing. In the case of the Presbyterian Church, it has lost more than half its members since the 1960s; the other denominations are also in free-fall.

Liberal Christians, including liberal Catholics, have no explanation for this outcome. They never tire of saying how we need to relax the strictures for ordination—allow women clergy, ban celibacy, permit practicing homosexuals—and bingo, watch for a sharp increase in both vocations and membership. Well, they won on policy, but they got their clock cleaned on numbers. Orthodoxy works, both theologically and sociologically, but that’s not something liberals will ever figure out.