

CONFLICTED CATHOLICS?



Bill Donohue comments on the results of the latest survey of Catholics conducted by the Pew Research Center:

The Pew survey highlights the difference between practicing and non-practicing Catholics. It also taps the extent to which Catholics appear to be conflicted on moral issues.

On questions regarding birth control, married priests, women priests, and same-sex marriages, the average approval difference between practicing and non-practicing Catholics is 23 percent. That is an enormous difference. It suggests that non-practicing Catholics have more in common with non-Catholics on these issues than they do with those who attend Mass weekly.

The survey did not distinguish between practicing and non-practicing Catholics on the following: Catholics were asked to assess Pope Francis on his “Standing for traditional moral values.” He received his highest rating on this issue (tied with “Spreading Catholic faith”): 81 percent. It can be surmised that this figure would be even higher among practicing Catholics, but that is not why this matters.

How can Catholics say they are okay with birth control, married priests, and women priests (only a third of practicing Catholics say the Church should recognize gay marriages), yet say Pope Francis is doing an excellent/good job in “Standing for traditional moral values”?

Equality, which is a key value of the American Creed, tugs

Catholics to give their blessings to married priests and women priests (birth control wins approval for lots of other reasons). But almost none are demanding changes. On the other hand, Catholics respect adherence to traditional moral values. This is a reflection of the uneasiness many of them have with the prevailing winds of moral relativism, and the pride they have in the Catholic Church as a reliable moral anchor.

The strong support for traditional values suggests a continuity in Catholic thought that is typically underplayed, if not totally ignored, by the media.

POPE LAUDS BENEDICT FOR ABUSE RESPONSE



Bill Donohue comments on remarks made today by Pope Francis on the sexual abuse scandal:

No one has done more to check the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church than Pope Benedict XVI, but he receives very little credit for doing so. That is why what Pope Francis said today matters: he singled Benedict out for his yeoman efforts. "Benedict XVI was very courageous and has opened a new way." Because of Benedict, he said, "the Church has done much, perhaps more than all the others."

Pope Francis is twice right. Long before Benedict became pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, as head of the Vatican's doctrinal

congregation, called for swifter and stronger procedures to punish molesting priests. That was in 1988. In 2001, he was given exclusive jurisdiction over these matters, and in 2003 he was awarded the power to police priestly sexual abuse. When he became pope, he made it more difficult for practicing homosexuals to enter the priesthood, the net effect of which has been a sharp decline in the number of abuse cases.

In his interview today, Pope Francis said, "The Catholic Church is perhaps the only public institution that has moved with transparency and responsibility. No one has done more, and yet the Church is the only one that is being attacked." The pope was obviously referring to the highly politicized, and maliciously conceived, United Nations report on the Vatican's response to this issue.

Pope Francis not only speaks truth to power, and to the people, he tells it like it is to those who selectively rally to his side. Yesterday, his comments condemning anti-Catholicism were, as I predicted, all but ignored. His remarks today lauding his predecessor will similarly be given short shrift. Such is the politics of the left, religious as well as secular.

POPE CONDEMNS ANTI-CATHOLICISM



Bill Donohue comments on the homily given by Pope Francis today at his Mass in the Santa Marta residence:

Militant secularism at home, and militant Islam abroad, are the two greatest threats to Catholicism today. Speaking of the latter, Pope Francis said, "there are more Christian martyrs today than during the early days of the Church." Communists in North Korea are also killing Christians at a record pace, and Communist China continues its persecution.

The pope rightly said that "the world does not tolerate the divinity of Christ. It doesn't tolerate the announcement of the Gospel. It does not tolerate the Beatitudes. And we have persecutions: with words, with insults, the things that they said about Christians in the early centuries, the condemnations, imprisonment...But we easily forget. We think of the many Christians, 60 years ago, in the labour camps, in the camps of the Nazis, of the communists: So many of them! For being Christians! And even today...But (people say) 'today we are better educated and these things no longer exist.' Yes they do!...They are condemned for having a Bible. They can't wear a crucifix."

The Holy Father is right. Islamism and communism are responsible for murdering Christians and persecuting Christianity. But the insults, the condemnations, and the censoring of religious speech that he addresses stem from another source: militant secularism.

It is precisely the "better educated" class who are leading the militant secularist crusade. They are the ones who seek to ban the public expression of religion, make movies that insult Catholicism, paint priests as molesters, ban Bibles from hotels, display vile anti-Catholic billboards, attempt to crash the St. Patrick's Day parade, sponsor Catholic-bashing artistic exhibitions, force Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, and the like.

Kudos to Pope Francis. His words underscore the reason why the Catholic League exists. Look for the media, including many in the Catholic media, to ignore them.

TRIBUTE TO POPE FRANCIS



Bill Donohue comments on the Catholic League's *New York Times* op-ed page ad in today's newspaper [click [here](#) to read it]:

I wrote this ad as a tribute to Pope Francis, and as a statement against those who are exploiting his words and/or seeking to deny Catholics their constitutional rights.