

False Pope

I am writing in response to Stephen Crawford's commentary "Secular world, religion different" (ODE, July 18), since he seems to be inviting response from "religious women." As a member of the Catholic Church, a 12-year veteran of Catholic schools and a feminist, I feel obligated to voice my opinion — even though it will not be the one Crawford was counting on.

In the context of Crawford's opinion, the word "equality" becomes meaningless. He claims that when we view the priesthood from a secular standpoint, bringing in the "humanistic" notion of equality, we will never understand the reverence he holds for the vocation.

It seems to me, then, that all of the church's teachings that I have taken to heart — "Love thy neighbor," "Treat others as you would hope to be treated" — are not the lessons the church wanted me to learn. But where should the notion of equality be more applicable than in the eyes of God and, therefore, in religious practice?

Forgive me if I fail to revere a vocation that discriminates against me. And for heaven's sake, don't teach me from the tender age of 5 or 6 that God loves me just as much as He loves every other human — male or female — and then relegate me to the world's "second bests," denying me the opportunity to serve God as I might choose, while claiming it has nothing to do with equality (or the lack thereof) and everything to do with God's will. I don't buy it.

For the record, I am also pro-choice, as are many of the Catholic women I am close to. Crawford claims it is not the intent of the church and other anti-abortion groups to "limit

the options of women, and thereby exercise a certain degree of control over their lives." I think that Crawford has summed up exactly what the intent of these groups is, but I also feel that it is somewhat beside the point.

Regardless of intent, that is the reality: limited options and lives controlled by other people. The church controls the lives of thousands of poor and Third World women with its anti-choice rhetoric — a fact we tend to lose sight of in middle-class America. Now the Vatican wants to tighten its grip on its employees. If you have an abortion or get a divorce, you lose your job.

Yes, Mr. Crawford, I do think it is easy for you to pontificate on the lives of religious and non-religious women because you are a man. Beside the benefits of being a priest (which include, by the way, the position to keep an entire parish hanging on every word you deliver from the pulpit, the power to admonish and judge every confused soul who enters the confessional and the privilege of being one of the first influences of Catholic children), you also have all of the status and power that comes with being male. You'll never have to contemplate an abortion or worry about the toll that having too many babies is taking on your body. And you will not be turned away from your chosen profession on account of your genitalia. I do not see why this is so hard for you to understand, but apparently it is.

So I will hold onto the beliefs I have as a thinking person, and I will enjoy my God-given individuality. Crawford's description of the experience of religious women rings false, as false as Pope John Paul's claim of "support" for women's rights

as he simultaneously denies us access to contraception, abortion and the priesthood.

Stephenie Frank
Graduate Student

Pope pomp

In response to Stephen Crawford's commentary (ODE, July 18) and the separation of church and state, I agree that the religious powers should remain concerned with religion and confine their dealings to their converts. Unfortunately, they want to enforce their morals and beliefs on everybody. If you don't do it. But to pass judgment and enforce your views on others is not the American way, for the most part.

If wearing a ruby ring, a red robe and a conical hat behind a bullet-proof shield is not a show of power and pomp, what is? The church is about power and power only. Salvation was retired many centuries ago. Ethics from a group that caused the Crusades, the Inquisition, the colonization, enslavement and decimation of the indigenous people of the New World and the raging conflicts in Ireland, the Middle East and Europe is doubtful.

The Catholic Church since the beginning has stated that the fall from grace was the result of Eve's action and it has since forced all women to submit to rule by man.

Having hidden or rejected the work of women in religion, the generally white male church leaders enjoy the benefits of free room and board, paid travel expenses, diplomatic immunity, and passports, housing, clothes, cars, staff, etc., supported by the gold ripped from Islamic mosques and Jewish temples

and mines worked by native slaves.

The Catholic Church believes in human life only when the humans bow to the rule of its theocracy. The rhetoric from the church is that sex happens only between a man and his wife, and only to produce children — so generally, four to five times in a lifetime is it. No discussion of birth control, period. No discussion of sexually transmitted diseases. The stance against abortion is not from the point of view of the sanctity of life but from the position of controlling all aspects of everybody's lives.

I wonder what philosophy courses allowed Crawford to maintain the idea that equality was a one-way street and covered not all freedoms, but just a few. I suggest that Crawford conduct a survey. He will realize that dogmas are not for everyone and that the church needs to realize that it is not preaching or practicing the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Religious views should be a personal thing and affect the personal life of an individual. Never should one's own views be forced upon another. You, Mr. Crawford, have the right to believe and practice your religion in your life. I require the freedom to do the same in mine.

James Dean Poyner
Eugene

Oregon analogy

There is another way to look at Bosnia. Let's call them Oregonians, not Bosnians. Let's say all the Muslim Oregonians decide to secede from the United States. Let's say the rest of us Oregonians want to remain U.S. citizens, but the Muslims insist and set up their government (and army) anyway. U.S. army units and non-Muslim National Guard

units already in Oregon are loyal to the United States and refuse to take orders to disarm and turn over their weapons to the Muslim government. Beauregard fires on Sumpter and Lincoln issues the first call for volunteers. Have we seen this before? At least the Bosnian Serbs are not insisting that all of Bosnia return to the fold (as Lincoln required). Although, after a partition of Bosnia, I believe it is likely the Serbian part of Bosnia will return to Yugoslavia (or Serbia).

The atrocity issues are shared on both sides. The Serb side has the best weapons and training and so are more successful in the tactics they attempt. The Muslim side has only been limited by its opportunities to practice atrocities. When they have had the opportunity, they seem to be no better than the other side.

All this begs the question of whether the Muslims were justified in wanting to secede from Yugoslavia in the first place. Maybe yes, maybe no. In any case, I do not believe there is any moral justification for the United States, the United Nations or NATO to take sides. Oil politics are likely involved.

James L. Bumpas
Eugene

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