

CHURCH CHAT

by
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“T H O S E P E O P L E”

First of all, if you haven't already done so, read this article in the National Catholic Reporter, April 15th issue: <http://ncronline.org/news/hidden-exodus-catholics-becoming-protestants>.

This report by Fr. Thomas Reese highlights the U.S. Religious Landscape Survey by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life.

For those of you who didn't just read the article, it's about Catholics who become Protestants. Now, read the article!

There's a lot to quote but here's my current focus:
“Any other institution that lost one-third of its members
would want to know why.”

But the U.S. bishops have never devoted any time at their national meetings to discussing the exodus. Nor have they spent a dime trying to find out why it is happening.”

Now why don't they address this exodus, do you imagine? Since they haven't answered this question, we are left to imagining. So imagine, I will.

I have always resisted lumping a large group of people together under a “they”. Usually, “they” are not a “they”; there are generally significant differences among any group. But if the Bishops were candy, they would all be M&Ms with a variety of colors. There are no Snickers, Butterfingers, Milky Ways, and certainly no Hershey Kisses. And where are my favorites, Almond Joys? Only M & Ms. So, in this case, I will say “they”.

Here are some reasons why they don't want to know why people leave the Catholic Church:

1. They already know why those people leave. Who needs surveys? Those people have little faith to begin with, and so they just leave because their commitment is minimal. Let them go, who needs them? A leaner, smaller, more loyal membership works better anyway. Dump the dead weight. Good riddance.
2. Those people can't accept the teachings of the Church because those people are too heavily influenced by the secular culture of the U.S. Their faith has been corrupted by the consumerism, commercialism, superficiality, and relativism of the general population. Those people can't see beyond sitcoms, latest movies, fashion, sports, and digest news. They are incapable of seeing the truth as proclaimed by church teaching. So, they gradually just

leave for an easier faith or no faith at all. All we can do is teach harder, longer, and stronger but when they have deaf ears, there is nothing else we can do. They will suffer the consequences.

3. Most of those people are too smart for their own good. They think they can figure out things about God, faith, morality without the bishops' guidance. Those people are too proud to accept the teachings of the magisterium as articulated by the bishops. Their pride drives them away and unless we are able to break their pride, they will continue to leave.
4. The fear factor is gone. Since those people are no longer afraid of mortal sin or hell, they feel free to leave. This lack of fear is especially evident among younger people.
5. We have higher priorities, like bringing back more Latinized language to the liturgy and reasserting our positions against abortion, same sex marriage, clerical celibacy and the ordination of women. Losing membership isn't nearly as important as these issues and if we add this exodus issue, we will dilute our essential message about our core concerns.
6. Other?

Anyway, those are some of the reasons I imagine are operating as the Bishops take no notice of the millions of people who are slipping out the back door of the church. It seems the Vatican isn't too concerned either perhaps because, as John Allen says, the Vatican's hope for growth of the Church is focused on what he calls the "global south", countries south of the equator.

If you know any of "those people", perhaps you can tell them why the Bishops are not conducting exit interviews. On second thought, it's probably better just to be nice to "those people."