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New York councilwoman talks being gay in the church

Joe Ferullo | Jun. 25, 2012 NCR Today

A unique new voice has been added to the debate stirred by Bill Keller's *New York Times* column [1]: Should liberal Catholics simply leave a church that clearly no longer wants them? Her answer to that question may surprise you.

Christine Quinn is the speaker of the New York City Council and a leading candidate to succeed Michael Bloomberg as mayor. She is Catholic, and she is gay.

Quinn gave a free-wheeling interview [2] this weekend to NPR, covering everything from her political views to her family history (her maternal grandmother survived the sinking of the Titanic). But toward the end of the segment, the topic turned to her sexual identity and her faith.

Quinn spoke movingly of how her father first rejected her when she came out but then apologized and reconciled. He now comes over to City Hall to visit her every day and was to march with his daughter in the Gay Pride parade over the weekend. All well and good, said NPR interviewer David Greene -- but what about your faith and your church? How does that work?

She gave a very New York, no-nonsense answer:

> QUINN: Well, it's just who I am. I mean, I'm Catholic and I'm gay. There's not much to deal with. It's who I am. It's how I wake up every morning.
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> GREENE: But your church, obviously, doesn't, you know, officially accept that.
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> QUINN: Right. That's kind of their problem, not mine. I mean, I just don't dwell on it. I'm not really sure what the upside of me dwelling on it would be. I mean, I was raised Catholic, I take a lot of comfort and inspiration and motivation and support from my faith. I get what they kind of see in some political issues. They get that we're not in agreement on that. But that doesn't make me not who I am. It's still who I am.
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> GREENE: Do you ever wake up and think I need to leave this church, I need to leave this faith, I ...
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> QUINN: No. Well, how can you leave a faith? A faith is who you are. It's what's inside of you. It's how you see the world. It's what inspires you. It's what comforts you. It's what uplifts you in the dark days. You can't leave a faith. The faith is who you are. It's what you have. Why should I leave the church? It's my church. They're the ones who have the wrong perspective. I'm not going to leave. If I leave, it's as if they won. I'm going to go into any church any time I want to, whenever I want to. It's my church. And no one's ever asked me to and no one ever will.

To me, Quinn's directness and confidence about her place in the church was a breath of fresh air. There's an honesty that even New York's Cardinal Timothy Dolan might appreciate.

And she might even have coined a rallying cry for people feeling pushed out of the church by its current direction: "That's kind of their problem, not mine."

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[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/21/opinion/defenders-and-critics-other-catholic-voices.html
[2] http://www.npr.org/2012/06/24/155657942/who-i-am-n-y-c-council-speaker-on-politics-faith