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Ending "Extra Omnes"

John McCarthy | Mar. 13, 2013 NCR Today

Note from John McCarthy: I wanted to change things up a bit today, and have invited my friend Bob Shine to share some commentary on something we should all be thinking about during this sede vacante. He tweeted a message similar to his thoughts below, and I asked him to expand upon it for this post. Please find and reflect on his thoughts below. Bob Shine is the Young Adult and Social Media Coordinator at New Ways Ministry, a Catholic LGBT justice ministry. He tweets @BobShineProblem and regularly blogs at Bondings 2.0[1].

Ending "Extra Omnes"

As *extra omnes* was declared, sealing the cardinals in and commencing the conclave, the potency of words loosely translating to ?everyone out? gave me pause. I reflected on those marginalized in our Church, those forced out of the Sistine Chapel where the next pope will be elected into the margins that an *extra omnes* mentality creates.

Foremost, *extra omnes* means more than half the Church is *de facto* excluded based on gender. Women, who stood at the foot of the Cross as men fled to hiding, have served with love since then as necessary and sustaining forces behind Catholic communities. Denying the contributions they offer, *extra omnes* continues the apartheid at our altars where women cannot live out their calls to ministry, ordained and otherwise. Sexism, the root sin from which these discriminations emerge, is fully at play in the conclave of all men.

Extra omnes based in misguided understandings of human sexuality excludes many. The lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community suffers when bishops repeatedly diminish each person?s dignity as created *imago dei* and reject the inherent goodness within same-gender relationships. An *extra omnes* mindset prefers that LGBT individuals remain silent in destructive isolation rather than openly flourish as Catholics. Anti-gay repression permeates the conclave, with one cardinal avoiding it after sexual misconduct allegations and other clergy unable to live openly.

Extra omnes excludes women religious and priests who pastorally witness to the Gospels in their entirety. Nuns who almost exclusively built up Catholic education, healthcare, and missions possess no voice in the conclave, and for engaging life?s messy realities American nuns instead gained Vatican censure. Good priests who envision a Vatican II church where *extra omnes* cedes to inclusion and less clericalism are stymied with secluded assignments for life.

Extra omnes silences thought and the theologians who preach new models of Christian life and liberation. It silences victims of sexual and physical violence who suffered once at the hands of abusers, and again from bishops who covered up crime en masse (many now voting in the conclave). It silences the public voice of Catholics to journey with the poor in protecting the common good when internal injustices undermine our broader credibility. Expounding those marginalized at this conclave by an *extra omnes* mentality could continue, but in all the principle failing of the conclave remains.

The coming pope will be elected by 115 older, celibate men in total solitude from the world, who claim to witness to Christ as they perpetuate a harmful *extra omnes* mentality. Yet, Jesus dined with all and loved without exception, speaking of expansive inclusion that never creates caveats for exclusion or calls for ?everyone out.?

I pray in gratitude for the powerful Gospel witnesses emerging from each community above, and I pray that the holy Spirit will bring forth a pope intent on truly loving like Jesus and a Catholic community which will begin the next conclave with *in omnes* ? ?everyone in!?

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Links:
[1] http://newwaysministryblog.wordpress.com/