

# Catholic Truth



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10, Sandyford Place, Glasgow, G3 7NB, Scotland

Email: [editor@catholictruthscotland.com](mailto:editor@catholictruthscotland.com) Telephone: +44 (0) 7 97 90 53 666

Robert Ffello MP  
Convenor  
Catholic Legislators' Network  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

15 July, 2013

Dear Mr Ffello,

I acknowledge receipt of your emailed letter dated 15 July, 2013 in which you complain about our online petition seeking enforcement, by the hierarchy, of Canon Law # 915 which prohibits the administering of Holy Communion to "manifest public sinners". You object to the fact that our petition statement identifies Catholic politicians who vote in favour of evil legislation such as abortion, euthanasia and same-sex marriage as belonging to that category and seek, from me, a retraction of our petition and an apology. You stress that MPs deliberated conscientiously before voting either way in the recent same-sex marriage debate or, in some cases, abstaining. Pity they didn't have someone on hand to remind them that the Patron Saint of Abstainers is Pontius Pilate. We sin, remember, as much by omission (what we *don't* do) as by our actions.

Your argument, in essence, is that Catholics are permitted to vote as they wish in Parliament, as long as they feel that their conscience is clear. This is not a principle which bears serious scrutiny. If you apply it to your political life, for example, you will see this immediately.

Analogies are never perfect, but I think it's fair to say that the following simple analogy serves to underline your erroneous understanding of conscience.

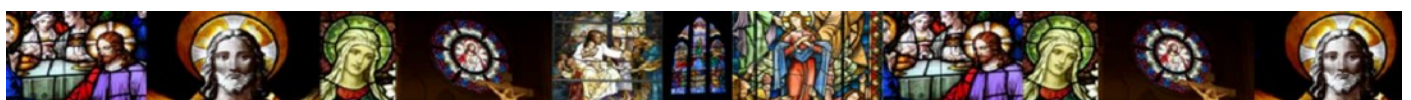
The Labour Party is opposed to the Government's proposal to privatise Royal Mail. However, by your standard of conscience you should be able to support privatisation of Royal Mail if you so choose. Are you seriously of the opinion that Ed Milliband would allow you to publicly contradict his policy and spread your own views instead? Or, is it not the case that you would be forced to either toe the Party line or resign and join another Party?

Conscience, Mr Ffello, is not a teacher: "*(it is) a law which (man) has not laid upon himself but which he must obey.*" (Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1776).

It is, I believe, providential that I received your communication on the day news reached me of another group of so-called Catholic politicians (Enda Kenny & Co in Ireland) who also think themselves worthy to pontificate to the Church on the true meaning of conscience, this time to justify the sin of Herod as, shamefully, they voted to legalise the murder of unborn children up to birth. Refusing to bow to the truth that no conscience is free to legalise murder, Enda Kenny - "privately a devout Catholic" as one hapless journalist described him - has placed his immortal soul in grave danger. Every UK MP who voted for "equal marriage" - or abstained - is likewise in danger of eternal damnation. There's just no "nice" way of saying this, Mr Ffello. Believe me, I've tried - and failed - to find less "offensive" words.

You refer to conscience in this matter of same-sex marriage legislation as though it were absolute: as though each man's conscience were his own God. This is a very great and dangerous error, subversive of the natural and moral order established by God. I repeat: conscience is not a teacher. Conscience, in fact, must be properly formed and informed if it is to follow the good and shun the evil. There is no such thing as freedom to offend against the Commandments of God, or to condone the offences of others in the name of conscience. That is not freedom - it is licence *disguised* as freedom.

Homosexual activity, as you must know, is condemned more than once in Sacred Scripture including the sixth Commandment - *Thou shalt not commit adultery* - which reserves all sexual activity to a faithful, lifelong marriage between one man and one woman.



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Homosexual activity, objectively, is a mortal sin which the Church calls “gravely disordered.” Therefore, no Catholic may condone such activity for any reason whatsoever. The moral teaching of the Church is fixed, clear and infallible in this matter - it is not open to obfuscation and dissent.

Your own selected quotations, in fact, prove the point. From St. Bonaventure: *“Conscience is like God’s herald and messenger; it does not command things on its own authority, but commands them as coming from God’s authority, like a herald when he proclaims the edict of the king. This is why conscience has binding force.”*

In other words, conscience has binding force only when it defers to the Commandments of God. And since God does not contradict Himself, it stands to reason that conscience cannot contradict the authority of God and still claim to be valid and binding.

From Gaudium et Spes: *“Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God.*

Again, you quote Church teaching that cannot be interpreted other than that conscience must be faithful to the Commandments of God. Yet, you appear to be attempting to adapt this quote, too, in favour of some kind of strange and liberal freedom of conscience that allows Catholics to either comply with God’s law or contravene it, each choice having equal validity and binding force. This is to try to square a circle.

From Cardinal Ratzinger’s CDF document: *“Living and acting in conformity with one’s own conscience on questions of politics is not slavish acceptance of positions alien to politics or some kind of confessionalism, but rather the way in which Christians offer their concrete contribution so that, through political life, society will become more just and more consistent with the dignity of the human person.”*

This is merely a statement about politics in general that does not specifically relate to morality. Much less does it accord rights to Catholic politicians to condone legislation that contravenes the sixth Commandment on the basis of a spurious interpretation of conscience.

I come now to your final sentence, which has to be the ultimate in hypocrisy. You write: *“In short, you should be ashamed of the damage you have done to our Church and its reputation.”*

Let us permit St. Paul to show exactly who it is that truly damages Christ’s Church and its reputation. But beware! You may consider the following to be very “judgmental.”

*“Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart, unto uncleanness, to dishonour their own bodies among themselves. Who changed the truth of God into a lie; and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

*For this cause God delivered them up to shameful affections. For their women have changed the natural use into that use which is against nature. And, in like manner, the men also, leaving the natural use of the women, have burned in their lusts one towards another, men with men working that which is filthy, and receiving in themselves the recompense which was due to their error. And as they liked not to have God in their knowledge, God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not convenient...” (Romans I: 25-26)*

Challoner notes: *God delivered them up: Not by being author of their sins, but by withdrawing His grace, and so permitting them, in punishment of their pride, to fall into those shameful sins.*

And now St. Peter Damian, 11<sup>th</sup> century Bishop and Doctor of the Church, who writes in Letter 31 of his treatise on homosexuality, called ‘Book of Gomorrah’ (Liber Gomorrhianus):

*“Without fail, it brings death to the body and destruction to the soul. It pollutes the flesh, extinguishes the light of the mind, expels the Holy Spirit from the temple of the human heart, and gives entrance to the devil, the stimulator of lust. It leads to error, totally removes truth from the deluded mind ... It opens up hell and closes the gates of paradise ... It is this vice that violates temperance, slays modesty, strangles chastity, and slaughters virginity ... It defiles all things, sullies all things, pollutes all things ...”*

And again:

*“This vice excludes a man from the assembled choir of the Church ... it separates the soul from God to associate it with demons. This utterly diseased queen of Sodom renders him who obeys the laws of her tyranny infamous to men and odious to God. She strips her knights of the armour of virtue, exposing them to be pierced by the spears of every vice ... She humiliates her slave in the church and condemns him in court; she defiles him in secret and dishonours him in public; she gnaws at his conscience like a worm and consumes his flesh like fire. ... this unfortunate man (he) is deprived of all moral sense, his memory fails, and the mind’s vision is darkened. Unmindful of God, he also forgets his own identity. This disease erodes the foundation of faith, saps the vitality of hope and dissolves the bond of love. It makes way with justice, demolishes fortitude, removes temperance, and blunts the edge of prudence.*

