

Welcoming 'Segregationists at the Altar'

Maureen Fiedler | Oct. 23, 2009 NCR Today

Imagine for a minute that it's 1954, as segregationists faced *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, the Supreme Court case which mandated school de-segregation. And imagine that the Vatican, or the Catholic bishops, said to Protestant segregationists in the South, "You can come to our schools, to Catholic schools, and we'll provide you with a home." Most Catholics would have been outraged, I daresay. (And of course, precisely the opposite actually happened, as many Catholic bishops were outspoken against racial segregation, and integrated Catholic schools -- thank God).

But it's a different story with gender segregation or sexual orientation. This is not a perfect analogy, granted. But the Vatican's overtures to dissident Anglicans sound like those "imagined" 1950's with a different twist. The Vatican is opening Catholic doors wide to Anglicans who believe in "segregation at the altar," for women, and for openly gay/lesbian clergy.

Where is the outrage at this policy? I have heard some of it. I attended a small liturgy with friends this week, and they shared this sentiment: We have enough Catholics who have not come to terms with human equality and gospel equality? why would we go searching for more? We should welcome newcomers who wrestle with issues, yes? including these issues, ? but why establish a policy that give special place to those with segregationist credentials?

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