

The church may be foolish, but it is my church

Mary Ann McGivern | Mar. 5, 2012 NCR Today

When I was a young sister, probably 20, still in the novitiate, I read Henri de Lubac's *The Splendor of the Church*.

He says one of the great temptations is to reject the church because it is sinful. He reviews bad behavior such as the Inquisition and support of slavery as well as foolish behavior, like condemning Galileo, to make a point: The splendor of the church is God, not wise human leadership.

Oh, how I loved that image of belonging to a sinful church, saved by God's particular interventionist love. What I didn't grasp in the midst of Vatican II, at the peak of my own enrapture with the things of God, was that in my own lifetime the church would again be both sinful and foolish. Nor did I understand that it is easier to live with the sins than with the foolishness.

It is gravely sinful to abuse children and to cover up that abuse, to be silent in the face of the Holocaust, to squander alms on luxury while people starve. I strive to understand, to call for firm purpose of amendment and not to judge the bishops when I speak out against their actions.

But it is foolish to rail, as the Missouri Catholic Conference is railing, against Sen. Claire McCaskill for voting against Sen. Roy Blunt's proposal to let any employer's health coverage be delimited by that employer's conscience.

This is not about abortion or contraception. It is yet another effort to stop health care reform in its tracks. The foolish bishops are dupes, being used by the rich in their war against the poor.

Foolishness can't be understood. Firm purpose of amendment is not possible. Foolishness is not willful; it simply is foolish.

This is my church, a sinful, foolish church, like me. I'm no longer enraptured by the accoutrements of religion and I, like de Lubac, strive to resist the temptation to turn my back on the church. It is my church.

Source URL (retrieved on 05/29/2017 - 14:22): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/church-may-be-foolish-it-my-church>