

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

September 21, 2012 at 3:42pm

No money, no bury ...

by Dennis Coday

NCR Today

I linked to this story this morning as part of **Morning Briefing**, but so many people have either asked me about it or pointed it out to me, I thought I should revisit it:

German bishops get tough on Catholics who opt out of church tax

Alarmed by a wave of dissenting Catholics quitting the faith, the bishops issued a decree on Thursday declaring such defection "a serious lapse" and listed a wide range of church activities from which they must be excluded.

Germans who notify their local tax office they that they are no longer practicing Catholics can put a halt to the 8-9 percent of their tax bill that goes to the church. And they have been doing that at an increasingly alarming rate since 2010, some 180,000 a year.

So Thursday the German bishops, reportedly with the approval of the Vatican, have decreed that these leavers have forfeited access to the sacraments and other church services like burials.

If they don't pony up the church tax, they can't be godparents or sing in the choir. They can't work for a church institution (like schools or hospitals) or volunteer in parish groups or charities.

"This decree makes clear that one cannot partly leave the Church," a statement from the bishops conference said.

Read more here.

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