

From: Rosemary Seaman
Subject: Protecting the Seal of the Confessional Inquiry vis a vis Child
Sex Abuse
Date: 24 Jul 2020 at 4:36:38 pm
To:
Cc:

The practice of Confession in the Catholic Church is of fundamental importance to the spiritual well being of its members - one of the seven Sacraments ,or Liturgical rituals ,underpinning one's 'state of Grace ' or good standing with God .

There is no logical justification for its perversion to being used as a tool of secular crime detection and punishment .

To go down this path , as proposed by the legislation , is to violate the longstanding acceptance of 'freedom of religion ' upon which our democracy is based.

Not only is it wrong in principle to attempt to do this, but it is also not at all a practical or workable proposition.

The interaction of priest and penitent is conducted anonymously- so how is the priest to identify the penitent ? The penitent is hardly likely to provide his / her name and address .

The requirement for the priest to report the perpetrator of sexual abuse is not only entirely impractical, but also could be open to mischief as a priest could be reported for not trying to identify a 'masquerading ' abuser .

The purpose of Confession (forgiveness/ absolution) can only be achieved if the penitent sincerely confesses the full truth and resolves not to ever repeat the particular sin - a serious matter of conscience.

Is it workable to add to the province of the Sacrament of Confession the condition that absolution will only be dispensed if the penitent takes the

matter to the police for secular criminal investigation?

In this case , how many such penitents would go to confession at all if it was a certain path to being arrested , rather than being 'protected ' by the Confessional, as has been alleged by the would be legislators.

In our view , the would be legislators of these changes to the Bill are often not only lacking knowledge and experience of this fundamental vital element of Catholic religious practice ,but are proposing changes that are both unworkable and open to abuse .

Moreover, it would be not a simple matter for West Australian Catholic Priests to comply with the proposed amended rules . The rules of the Confessional Seal are set by the Pope in Rome . Local priests are absolutely bound by his ruling .

Will this proposed change do anything at all to stamp out the evil of child sexual abuse? Almost certainly not. We have yet to meet a single priest who has had a paedophile confess his crimes in confession .

Will this be the thin end of the wedge ? Will Catholic Priests in the future then be asked to report cases of domestic violence, rape , battery , robbery , murder
and so on ?

Thank you for your consideration,

Yours sincerely,

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