

No hypocrisy in Bishop's opposition to 'Fool'

Bishop Gregory Aymond recently advised Catholics that Planned Parenthood's *Nobody's Fool* program is not approved by the Diocese of Austin and he strongly encouraged them not to utilize it. Understandably, not everyone has agreed.

Trib editor Carlos Sanchez, however, went so far as to criticize the Bishop for being a judgmental hypocrite (July 11), citing the abuse scandal in support of this claim.

This is an example of how we increasingly allow public discourse to lapse into finger-pointing and name-calling. Unfortunately, the rhetoric of personal attack and "gotcha" politics does nothing to resolve the serious social problems we face and only increases animosity and incivility within our communities. Yet we persist in self-destructively trying to score points against each other rather than laboring to bring our best insights to bear on the issues of the day.

It should surprise no one that the Catholic Church discourages participation in "*Nobody's Fool*." Catholics are, after all, a Christian community that believes the human person was created by God to live a life of self-giving love. This belief touches directly on every aspect of human behavior, including sexuality and marriage. It requires that all "facts of life" (sexual or otherwise) be understood and lived in relation to the love of God. And it binds the church and Catholic parents to ensure that children are brought to know and value this way of life.

One need not be a theologian to recognize that



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Guest column

vision of sexuality to anyone who will listen. It is under no obligation to please any religious group.

Catholic clergy and parents also have a civil right — and a religious obligation — to express their judgment regarding *Nobody's Fool* as it affects our families.

For many years, with the support of parishioners, I have informed our parish of Planned Parenthood's beliefs and cautioned them against *Nobody's Fool*. Like the bishop's memo, this was a simple statement of fact that involved no personal attack on parents or on Planned Parenthood. I do not see how this makes us hypocrites.

Planned Parenthood's secular view of human sexuality is often at odds with Catholic thought. This is an important point.

Planned Parenthood is not feignously "neutral." It violates Catholic beliefs because it is open to various sexual activities we hold to be harmful to every person and also contrary to the Gospel. In our free society, Planned Parenthood has a right to present its

A hypocrite is someone who pretends to be something he is not, particularly in moral matters. To the best of my knowledge Bishop Aymond, myself, and most other Catholics do not pretend to be "holier than thou" or threaten people with damnation for disagreeing with us. Nor do the failings of various bishops in the abuse scandal have anything to do with our own integrity or the issue at hand.

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For example, I think most people would recognize immediately the injustice of calling the *Trib* editor a lying hypocrite simply because he belongs to a profession whose repeated dishonesty has caused several press scandals recently.

It is flat-out wrong then to "tar brush" us or accuse us of hypocrisy. And it is unnecessary. One need only show how we are mistaken in judging that *Nobody's Fool* is offensive to Catholic morality.

Name-calling is a tactic best left to playgrounds and barrooms. Public debate should be based on civility and the facts — especially from pulpits and editorial pages.

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