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Orthophobia and the Marginalized QTBGL Catholic

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As I survey the current state of the Catholic Church, I believe I can no longer hold back. It is time for me to come out.

I am and have for some time identified as a member of the QTBGL community, and I need to explain why I call myself a QTBGL Catholic.

For those who may not know, “QTBGL” stands for “Quietly Totally Believing God’s Law” and is sometimes referred to more simply as “TBGL” (just Totally Believing God’s Law). Personally, I think the “Q” is an essential aspect of our community, since it’s important to recognize just how

quietly we go about totally believing the fullness of truth of the Catholic faith in our daily lives.

Coming out at this moment is vitally important. Not only do I need to be utterly honest about who I really am, but the Church needs to do a better job ministering to the QTBGL Catholic in the pew, not to mention QTBGL clergy in the Church, like me. We are marginalized, unjustly discriminated against, and regularly face demeaning “orthophobia” (irrational hate for, and fear of, right-thinking Christians) not only from fellow Catholics but even from secular society.

The level of orthophobia is getting worse, in fact. Within the Church, we are called “haters” and “bigots” simply for accepting and affirming what the Church actually teaches us about liturgy, justice, virtue, and, of course, the human person and sexuality (natural law). Outside the Church, orthophobes everywhere are trying to curtail our religious liberty, take away our conscience rights, and subject us to ridicule and hate simply because of who we really are.

Yet many QTBGL Catholics really feel as though we were born this way. Or at least baptized this way. Even in the face of such orthophobic animosity and outright discrimination (some of us have even lost jobs after publicly coming out as QTBGL), we *know* we are being true to ourselves. We are resigned to a rather lonely life of quietly accepting each and every truth taught to us by the Church, often at great personal cost.

You may have heard that recently a *bishop* was heartlessly attacked by orthophobes for his faithful interpretation of canon law as it applies to reception of Holy Communion and to funerals. While this bishop has not overtly come out as a QTBGL Catholic, orthophobes everywhere

treated him that way. He was vilified horribly, even threatened.

Despite this bishop's brave example, however, we need to face it—QTBGL Catholics are under attack and often feel alienated from so many other leaders of the Church who are supposed to welcome, affirm, and accompany us with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.

Just think of how very few QTBGL-affirming parishes there really are in our local dioceses. When was the last time you saw a parish *intentionally* advertise something like, “At St. Fidelis Parish, ALL are really welcome—including QTBGL Catholics. Come as you are. Who am I to judge?”

It just doesn't happen often enough. Sure, there may be some parishes that do what they can to minister to members of the QTBGL community and help us feel accepted for who we are. But more often than not, especially at the diocesan level, our needs are largely rejected and ignored.

For example, do our Church and parish leaders really *not* know the disheartening and isolating double standard that so many QTBGL Catholics experience? Too often, our leaders devote lots of time and energy ministering to orthophobic Catholics who reject us, offering *them* lavish attention, welcome, affirmation, and acceptance. Yet, many of these same leaders never seem to get around to teaching the orthophobic Catholics all those truths that we QTBGL persons accept unreservedly. We certainly don't feel very respected in such unwelcoming parish environments.

My QTBGL community is *starving* for the nourishment that can only come from our pastoral ministers. It's like a dagger in the hearts of marginalized QTBGL Catholics to know that we ourselves may *rarely* hear the fullness of truth in our parishes. But more than that, many of us “out”

members of the QTBGL community have great concerns that orthophobic Catholics are not hearing those truths either. Often, when we approach parish and diocesan leaders with our concerns, mostly we are *ignored outright*—never hearing a word of affirmation or comfort. I can't tell you how many times QTBGL Catholics have phoned or written their dioceses to ask for support when orthophobia rears its ugly head in our local parishes and even in our schools.

When we get no response, how can such silence be construed as respect, compassion, and sensitivity? How can it *not* be construed as a form of unjust discrimination against QTBGL Catholics?

By coming out, I am hoping to contribute to a culture of authentic “bridge building,” so to speak, between the institutional Church and the QTBGL community. And, I must say, the onus is really on the Church to take the first steps to eradicate orthophobia in all its forms and to reassure the QTBGL Catholic that, yes, we have just as much right to be part of the Church as even the pope does. QTBGL Catholics have *real gifts* to offer. We need to be permitted to *share* our God-given gifts. Particularly, our *total acceptance* of the truth is a great gift to the Church. Why don't we hear this affirmed more in our churches?

Oddly, it's a bit like the parable of the shepherd who goes after the one sheep but, in a twist of the parable, takes absolutely *no* precautions to meet the needs of the other 99 sheep while he is busy seeking and finding that one lost lamb. What shepherd, while seeking the one lost ewe, leaves 99 without food, water, protection, and guidance? What shepherd, after *finding* the lost sheep, brings it back and spends *a huge amount of time* caring for it while ignoring the requests and needs of the other 99? Such a shepherd might

say to that one lost sheep, “You know, it’s okay if you still want to identify as a ‘lost sheep’; I don’t want to make you feel unwelcome or judged just because you have no real interest in thinking of yourself as ‘found’ like these other 99.”

In the fractured parable I’ve penned, when the 99 see how little value the shepherd seems to place on staying “found,” they might feel a bit underappreciated.

With these things in mind, my coming out as a QTBGL Catholic will also help combat the “erasure” our community has experienced for too long. We exist. We are out. We’re in every parish, every pew. QTBGL pride should be proclaimed in every parish community.

I can’t begin to say what a relief it is to finally come out and embrace my QTBGL identity.

Just one more thing—maybe we could come up with a QTBGL-pride *flag* to inspire us. I mean, I think we have a real shot at eradicating orthophobia, even in my lifetime. But we will need the cooperation of all Catholics, and all Catholic leaders. Until then, those who do make the brave choice to minister to QTBGL Catholics and our families will likely face hate, persecution, discrimination, and outright rejection.

Even so, I’ve heard from those ministering to the QTBGL community that all the hateful comments they endure from orthophobic Catholics seem like *nothing* after meeting just one QTBGL person or parent who says “thank you.”

And so—as a newly out QTBGL Catholic, on behalf of our community, I say to all who choose to minister to our pastoral needs:

Thank you.

Editor’s note: Pictured above is a detail from “Holy Communion” painted by Ariel Agemian.