

**Since the Pope has said that there is no moral justification for anti-personnel mines, does this mean that those who support APMs, and those who oppose their removal, should be denied communion?**

Pope: No Justification for Anti-Personnel Mines  
US Attends Conference for 1st Time, No Plans to Sign Convention  
By Jesús Colina

VATICAN CITY, DEC. 14, 2009 (Zenit.org).- There are no ethical arguments to defend the production and use of anti-personnel landmines, especially given that most victims are innocent civilians, a statement written on Benedict XVI's behalf is reiterating.

The Pope's secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, affirmed this in a note sent on the Holy Father's behalf to a six-day summit that concluded Dec. 4 in Cartagena, Colombia.

The Cartagena Summit was the second review conference on the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The convention is also known as the Ottawa Treaty.

The Holy See reiterated its appeal to all nations to join the 156 countries that have adopted this convention, which has been in force since 1999. China, India, the United States and Russia are the four most important states that have yet to sign it.

In the letter, the Holy See also appeals "to all states to recognize the deplorable humanitarian consequences of anti-personnel mines."

Cardinal Bertone wrote: "Experience shows that these weapons have caused more victims and damages among the civilian population, which should be defended, than they have served to defend states.

"The thousands of victims that they continue to bring remind us, in case it should still be necessary to repeat it, of the chimera of wanting to build peace and stability with an exclusively military vision."

The Holy Father's closest collaborator reiterated that "peace, security and stability cannot depend only on military security, but above all depend on the existence of all those conditions that allow for the full development of the human person, which so many times are impeded by the use and presence of anti-personnel mines."

The letter expressed Benedict XVI's closeness "to all the victims, their families and the affected countries."

"They all need will power and courage to undertake a process of rehabilitation, and they also need our help and human closeness," the cardinal wrote.

The papal statement reiterated "the Holy See's unconditional support to all those involved in the great task of freeing our world from anti-personnel mines."

The Cartagena Summit concluded with the resolution to give greater assistance to victims. It also noted that four countries -- Albania, Greece, Rwanda and Zambia -- have cleaned all their areas of these mines, in compliance with the treaty.

The Cartagena Action Plan to guide efforts between 2010 and 2014 pivots on two main goals: assistance to the victims of anti-personnel mines and the humanitarian clean-up of contaminated fields.

... Twenty of the 39 countries that have not adhered to the Ottawa Treaty attended as observers. Among them -- for the first time -- was the United States, which announced a review of its anti-personnel mines policy, although for the time being there is no sign of intentions to adopt the convention.

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### **A Cardinal's Response to a Scandal**

From *The New York Times*, December 14

To the Editor:

Re "[A Bishop's Words](#)" (editorial, Dec. 7):

The arrogance of Cardinal Edward M. Egan is stunning. My thanks to The New York Times for bringing the lawsuit that finally compelled the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport to release documents relating to sexual abuse of children.

As a child growing up in Hell's Kitchen in New York, I was sexually abused by a priest. He was never punished by the church or by civil law. Like the other little girls who were victims, I could not tell my mother. Priests, after all, were next to God. My father would have killed him, so I couldn't tell him either. The Irish poor could hardly feed themselves, let alone bring a lawsuit.

The abusing priest lived to be 97 and was simply transferred from parish to parish. I know this because an elderly cousin sent me his glowing obituary. I couldn't bring myself to tell her the truth.

The question, then, for Cardinal Egan is not how many priests actually do not abuse children, but how many abusing priests have gotten away with it.

Eileen Adamec

Minneapolis, Dec. 7, 2009

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To the Editor:

In "A Bishop's Words," you have pointed to the essence of the sexual abuse problem in the Catholic Church, in that a bishop can obfuscate, cover up and stonewall abuses going on in his diocese because it is part of the culture of the hierarchy in the church, emanating right from the Vatican, where the pope and the Curia know what goes on with their underlings.

As bishop of Bridgeport, Cardinal Edward M. Egan had the tacit approval of the Vatican, where the culture is blind to any actions as long as it covers up anything

that might embarrass the institutional church. The prime example of this is Cardinal Bernard F. Law, who in Boston was egregious in aiding and abetting sexual abuse. And what happened to him? He was given a cushy job in Rome.

Cardinal Egan is but one of many, but the heart of the problem lies in Rome.

Paul M. Hennessey  
Wharton, N.J., Dec. 7, 2009

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To the Editor:

There were clearly terrible mistakes made by the leadership of the Catholic Church during the period of the abuse scandal. This should not be minimized in any way. But please bear in mind that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops instituted, in response, a series of vigorous controls to prevent this from ever happening again, and the church will be better for this.

I would remind you at the same time, however, that during the course of this terrible period, in excess of 95 percent of Catholic priests served their flocks with holiness, honor and humility, and the world remained a much better place because of these holy, dedicated men.

If you look hard enough, you will indeed find thousands upon thousands of stories where lives and souls were saved by the dedicated, selfless service of Catholic priests.

Michael J. Rogers  
Rocky Hill, Conn., Dec. 7, 2009

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To the Editor:

So Cardinal Edward M. Egan thinks that it's "marvelous" how "very few [priests] have even been accused" of sexual abuse and "how very few [cases] have even come close to having anyone prove anything." I wonder whether Cardinal Egan, whose legal testimony as bishop of Bridgeport focused on deflecting accusations against his clergy, and his fellow bishops have counted the cost of their years of stonewalling, their attempts through church lawyers to discredit accusers, and their strategy of hiding suspected abusers in plain sight by transferring them from parish to parish.

The most obvious cost is to a generation of Catholics whose trust in their church has been repaid by the discovery that that church for many years put its own welfare above that of their children.

And there is the cost the church's own teaching authority and its moral authority have suffered by its persistent refusal to take responsibility for the cover-up. But a cost less remarked is to the reputation of parish priests, who became unjustly suspect despite their blameless conduct because the bishops' shell game diffused the suspicion that should have been directed against the abusers alone among the members of all the religious communities in which they continued to live. In seeking to whitewash the guilty, the bishops besmirched the innocent.

Thomas Leitch  
Newark, Del., Dec. 7, 2009

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To the Editor:

If someone were to make sexual abuse charges against an employee of The New York Times, are we to expect that Times officials would not give the accused a fair hearing? So why should a different standard apply to Cardinal Edward M. Egan, who, when he was the bishop of Bridgeport, refused to throw his priests under the bus as soon as accusations surfaced?

Of course, sexual abuse is indefensible. It is also indefensible for the leaders of organizations to sell out their own on the basis of an accusation. It takes courage to defend the rights of the accused, especially when the charges are serious, and that's why Cardinal Egan should be admired, not chastised.

William A. Donohue  
President, Catholic League  
for Religious and Civil Rights  
New York, Dec. 7, 2009

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**Please send your comments, and any articles you would like to share, to [tony@tonyercolano.com](mailto:tony@tonyercolano.com)**