

Protest the Pope is not anti-Catholic, it is anti-Pope – this pope

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The first thing I want to say is that the Protest the Pope campaign is not anti-Catholic. Some Catholic bloggers have tried to portray us as some kind of off-shoot of the Orange order, but this simply isn't true.

Our title is *Protest the Pope* and that's what it means – this particular pope, Joseph Ratzinger. It does not mean protest the Catholics. Indeed, many Catholics entirely understand what we are about and have stated their support.

On the [Protest the Pope blog](#) we have a contribution from a Catholic priest who sums up the feelings of many Catholics in the pews who are sick of being represented by someone who is so far away from their own idea of what a compassionate life consists of.

In the past twenty years, the number of people going to Sunday mass has halved in Britain. Last week I read that 50,000 Austrians formally resigned from the church in the previous year.

This does not sound like a church that is at peace with its leadership.

Ratzinger has said that he doesn't care if the backsliders leave. He wants a smaller, purer church, one that gives no quarter to his own view of the world. He will soon have his wish if current trends continue.

We are told that there are a billion Catholics in the world. This may be true in the sense that a billion people have been baptised by Catholic priests. But how many of them actually want to live by the teachings of the present Vatican hierarchy?

Like everyone else – except it seems the old men in Rome – modern Catholics want to live in the modern world. They want to take account of scientific advances and knowledge. They love their church, but they don't hate homosexuals. They like their priest, but they feel uncomfortable at the Vatican's unrelenting opposition to contraception.

So, Protest the Pope is not anti-Catholic, it is anti-Pope – this pope.

Our protest will not be confrontational, it will be parallel. We are not going to try to arrest the pope, but we do want him to know that his teachings are profoundly inhumane and damaging to so many

people. We want him to know that we do not appreciate his attempts to interfere in the legislative processes of our country.

We are proud of our legal protections for gay people and he has no business trying to undermine them. He claims to be a head of state, yet his own "state" the so-called Holy See is answerable to no-one. It observes no treaties or covenants. The only agreements it has with other countries are concordats that are entirely to do with privileging the church.

You will hear from other people about the child abuse scandal and the part Ratzinger played in covering it up. We are told that he is now doing more than any other pope to put this right. Yet he has been in a position to put it right for decades and did nothing.

We can only conclude that he would have preferred it to stay confidential, within the walls of the Vatican.

Protest the Pope started as a protest about the cost of this visit, but others have joined that have different issues with Ratzinger – women who want to take their rightful place in the churches life, priests who want to see an end to the celibacy rules, gay people who are – when they are indentified – driven from the seminaries and the priesthood.

Benedict is entitled to his views, and to make them clear. But we – the millions who despise those views – also have a right to make clear that they are damaging, cruel and have no place in legislation.

We need to let the pope know this loud and clear. And there will be no better time to do it than when he is in our country.

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