

Email from Gerard Henderson to Peter Fitzsimons – 23 December 2008

Peter

I always read The Fitz Files. So I noticed your piece on Sunday 14 December 2008 where you (favourably) reported the views of a reader who blamed the Vatican for over-population in the Third World.

It's all very easy – and very safe – for Westerners to attack the Catholic Church for its policy on artificial birth control. By the way, it's not a policy I agree with. But the fact is that Catholic societies no longer have high birth rates. However, Muslim societies have high birth rates. It's just that it is not as fashionable (and far more dangerous) to bag Islam than the Catholic Church.

You may be interested in the following exchange which took place between the American scholar Francis Fukuyama and a (sectarian) audience participant at the United States Studies Center on 28 May 2008:

Question: Thank you Frank for your address. How can those of us who favour universal artificial birth control, and wish to encourage people in poor countries to use it, persuade the Catholic Church to change its policy bearing in mind that our governments... don't want to put pressure on Rome because they're going to lose votes.

Francis Fukuyama: : I would not blame the Catholic Church as the first offender in terms of, you know – this is something that I think people have not taken aboard sufficiently. But there are many developing, large developing countries, including several Catholic ones like Brazil, that have gotten much closer to the demographic transition where they are much closer to replacement fertility than in previous decades. This has happened in Mexico and Brazil, in Thailand, a number of big important developing countries. The places where you have really out of control numbers still are in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and in the Middle East and I don't think the Pope's going to have much influence in those parts of the world.

It just happens that there are Muslim majorities in the Middle East and parts of sub-Saharan Africa. If you are in doubt about the large number of children born to Muslim parents you might check out, er, Lakemba.

Have a great Christmas and a happy New Year.

Gerard Henderson

Email from Peter Fitzsimons to Gerard Henderson – 2 January 2009

Thanks Gerard and you make interesting points.

True, I hadn't particularly focused on Muslim overpopulation, and the exchange below is very much worth noting.

All the best to you and Anne for 2009. Me and mine are off to Cuba in a few hours, which I think will be fascinating.

Regards,

Peter