

Church-goers' un-Christian gripes aired on Web site

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Priests and members of Catholic churches turn to the people around them during worship and shake hands and exchange hugs for a few minutes, saying "peace be with you," "God's peace to you" or something similar.

But what if the person next to you might be the anonymous writer flaming you on an Internet bulletin board?

And isn't flaming kind of un-Christian?

The acrimony among some parishioners at St. Peter Catholic Church in Geneva, as well as nonmembers from around the country, has found an outlet on the Web site of the company making a film about Monsignor Joseph Jarmoluk and his role in the Mark Campobello sexual abuse criminal case.

A discussion board said it has had more than 126,000 visits, with a sub-board registering 6,900-plus posts, as of mid-afternoon Thursday. An Internet radio show Wednesday night by people from the company drew more than 100,000 listeners, the Web site said.

Posters are accusing people, by name, of being distracting and threatening at daily Mass by making noises, including deliberately closing doors loudly. One wrote she is tired of "nutcakes ... holding a crucifix in the face of the priest as they get Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our God, lying and accusing." Another poster writes in the voice and viewpoint of Satan, exclaiming with glee that his workers are doing exactly what he wants: to tear apart the church.

Like many Internet bulletin boards, many of the same people post over and over. Most use screen names, including TruthSquad, grottorock and FatherofLies. Profiles for many of the screen names have no details, such as real name or e-mail address, but indicate they are willing to accept private messages from registered users of the site.

The viciousness of the dialogue would not seem to fit with Christianity's philosophy about how people should treat each other and what they are supposed to be doing with their lives.

"We are committed to the two great commandments: to love God first, and to love our neighbors as ourselves," said Owen Phelps, communications director for the Rockford Diocese. So discussion should be responsible and respectful, he said.

Bishop Thomas Doran has asked Jarmoluk to get filmmakers to stop the documentary and shut down the message board. Phelps said he has not discussed the Web site's commentary

with the bishop.

He likened the church to a family: brothers and sisters may have disagreements, but "you hold out hope for complete and full reconciliation."

The anonymity afforded by the Internet "opens up opportunity that requires a choice: Are we going to be as responsible and considerate as if we had to stand up and say it in a public square?"

"Apparently not."

About Cross the Line

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People: Producer of the film "Forsaken" is listed as Tom Taddeo. Numerous Web sites and the Internet Movie Database list a Tom Taddeo as an independent filmmaker, producer, actor, writer and cinematographer in New York state.

Source: www.ctlnyc.com (also known as www.cinecura.com), www.imdb.com
