

'SIT DOWN GIRLIE'

Girlie Dresses Down



Dead nuns don't cure cancer

Mary McKillop was a feisty, intelligent, activist woman who was excommunicated from the Catholic Church for reporting child sexual abuse by priests. She should be remembered for her personal deeds and qualities and not some mumbo jumbo about miracles. As Dr Peter Evans points out in a letter to *The Age* (7 October 2010) miracles are inexplicable occurrences and these days more and more scientific evidence is available to explain such things as remissions in cancer. And how are people with cancer who have prayed vehemently supposed to feel when the miracles aint available for them? For Heaven's sake let's remember Mary McKillop for what she did achieve.

Free contraception for the poor

The Philippines government has decided to provide contraceptives to poor couples despite opposition from the Catholic Church. (*The Age*, 28 September 2010)

Prime Minister Benigno Aquino has said the number of children that couples want should be up to them. The Catholic Church has a dominant position in the Philippines and, despite a population of 94 million in 2010 (up from 76.5 million in the 2000 census), continues to oppose contraception.

Meanwhile Pope Benedict XVI has had a bit of a rethink about condoms. Once seen as evil contraceptives, the Pope has conceded condoms may be useful in reducing the risk of infections such as HIV/AIDS. Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations' Don Baxter has said that, by rejecting condoms, the Vatican have been morally culpable for the infection of millions in countries like Africa and the Philippines (*The Age*, 22 November 2010).

There has been much discussion around what the Pope has actually intended. Are condoms now okay for heterosexual sex, same-sex activities or, given that the Pope is balancing the lesser of two evils, when having sex with altar boys?

No Niqap in Court

A woman who asked to wear the niqap while giving evidence in court in Western Australia has accepted a judge's ruling that she must uncover her face. Judge Shauna Deane ruled it would be inappropriate for the woman to give evidence wearing a garment that would make it impossible to assess facial gestures. The judge accepted that the woman had worn the niqap all her adult life and removing it in public would cause her embarrassment, the trial processes must be fair for everyone concerned.

Meanwhile a law banning the burqua in public has been passed in France. In the United States a Muslim woman is taking action before the Equal Opportunity Commission against Disneyland for not allowing her to serve customers while wearing a headscarf which was not consistent with the Disney 'look'.

Anti-mini skirt law given short shift

In Chile a ban on mini skirts was short lived when women protested. Sergio Gahona the Governor of a regional area had banned public employees from wearing mini skirts or baring their shoulders. He said he was just trying to put things in order but his conservative women colleagues called the ban a joke and insisted they would dress as they pleased including showing off their nice legs. The governor agreed that parts of the Order dealing with personal presentation were excessive and would be corrected.

Not until you're 18!

A 14-year-old Melbourne girl told a child protection worker she was not attending school because her father did not approve and she was being sent overseas to be married. She said she had been engaged for a month and had never met the man but had only seen a photograph of him. She also said she wasn't being forced to marry and if she didn't like her fiancé she could refuse. She was unsure of her mother's feelings about the marriage and had not considered having to have sex if married. Child protection workers told the Family Court of Australia the girl appeared not to understand the consequences of marriage. The Court had her father surrender her passport, blocked her departure until she is eighteen and placed a Federal Police 'watch list' on her at international departure points. (*The Age*, 15 September 2010)

The small business

Taiwan's Government is set to decriminalise some parts of the sex industry by allowing prostitutes to open small businesses. The current law is set to sunset in late 2011. It currently punishes sex workers but not customers. The proposed law would allow small businesses to be run by up to five sex workers. Sex zones or larger businesses are not proposed.

Time for change

The acquittal of a Cairns couple charged over a home abortion and supplying drugs to procure an abortion has been welcomed by pro-choice advocates. Dr Caroline Da Costa has called for the Queensland Government to follow Victoria's lead by reforming the law so no-one is ever charged in the same way again. She said Queensland's abortion laws were written in 1899 and are no longer relevant. (See Jo Wainer, Abortion Case Proves Need for Law Change, *The Age*, 18 October 2010).

Meanwhile in Victoria Dr Susie Allanson has called for the declaration of a 'bubble' or 'exclusion zone' to protect women seeking services from a fertility clinic in East Melbourne. Anti-abortion protesters calling themselves The Helpers of God's Precious Infants are holding yet another 40-day vigil and women and staff entering the Clinic feel harassed and intimidated by them. In 2001 a security guard at the Clinic was murdered.

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