

## Problem and Solution · *W. Cotter Murray*

MY GIRL FRIEND is Catholic. She's real nice. And real sweet. And real good. I'm Jewish. That doesn't matter. My parents sent me to this school. They said it was a great school for discipline. Sure. Sure.

Christina has this habit. Every time she gets excited and she's going to do something wrong. You know what I mean. She does this thing with her hand. She says it's only "making the Sign of the Cross." I asked her about it. She doesn't know why she does it. Her mother used to do it. Christina showed me how to do it. And how to say the words.

Christina is a straight A student and I think I'm in love with her. She does this thing, and she just mumbles. It's kind of to ward off evil or danger or something, she says. Where's the evil? Where's the danger?

I have told her it turns me off. I'm not religious. My parents are Unitarians. I wasn't brought up with religion. Christina wants to know why it turns me off. What's wrong with it? I don't know. It's just voodoo. I don't say this to her. I respect her, and if that's her thing, I got to go along with it.

I have written to the Pope. I did not tell Christina. I wrote to John Paul II. In English. I know a little Italian. I could have written in Italian. Christina says he knows forty or fifty languages. I seriously doubt that. I've seen him on TV. He *reads* the stuff. They coach him how to read it. Like opera singers. For speaking, he memorizes a few lines. "I haf kum . . . wid luf in my hyert for you all, and for your childrens . . . ess-pecially." He can memorize a few lines like that. And say them, but the tough stuff he has to read. And I don't know if he really understands what he is reading.

I hope he understands what I have written. I don't want him to get me wrong. I'm not an anti. I couldn't really love Christina and be an anti, could I? I like the Pope.

I didn't go to Father H. He has an open door policy. I could have gone and explained my suggestion. I just didn't want to go through channels. Went directly to Rome. Hell, if I'd gone through channels some male secretary priest would have thrown my suggestion in the wastebasket. I'm some kind of nut. And that would be the end. I don't want that to happen. I think my suggestion is a good one. And especially if there are a lot

of guys like me with Catholic girl friends who decide they want to make the Sign of the Cross at all sorts of turn off times.

Here is my suggestion. It's so simple I can't think why the Pope hasn't come up with it himself. Maybe he *has* thought of it. And doesn't want to suggest it, afraid they might think he's radical. Well, he can blame me. I'm willing to bear the guilt.

Course, he'll have to change the way he makes the Sign of the Cross on himself. Will that change him? The Church? Who knows? These are big questions. I don't feel qualified to answer.

Here is my suggestion. I'm not proposing a radical change, to do away with making the Sign of the Cross altogether.

When Christina was showing me how to do it, touching her forehead and her breasts and left shoulder and right shoulder and joining her hands, muttering, "In the name of Father . . . Son . . . Holy Ghost . . . Amen" and then jumping into bed, I just laughed. She glared at me, and I stopped, and said nothing till later. And we could discuss it rationally. She didn't know how the little routine got started. "Maybe the Pope does," she said. "Why don't you ask him?" I kissed her.

I did a little research. Protestants don't seem to be hung up on the Sign of the Cross like Catholics. Christina said, how would she know, and why was I so worried about the thing anyway. *I* didn't have to do it.

I mentioned I'd seen some of our basketball players at the free throw line doing it. And some Latin ball players at the plate. The idea is pretty widespread. "It's just something we do," Christina said. "Don't take it personally. It's nothing against you. I love you."

I did it a few times just for the heck of it.

"You know," I said. "There's something just a little bit not right about the way . . ." I was laughing.

I love Christina's navel. It is a receding one. Whoever tied the knot did a beautiful job. Beautiful, deep and round. I lick it. She loves that.

Here is my suggestion I wrote to the Pope to change the way they make the sign.

You start out in the same old way touching your right hand to your forehead (even lefties have to use the right hand), and saying the same old words, "In the name of the Father . . ." Okay. Then, you take your hand from your forehead and put it on your navel, and say, "And of the Mother . . ." Got it. And then you put your hand on your left shoulder, and say

“And of the Son . . .” Then, on your right shoulder, and say, “And of the Daughter . . .” Then, join both hands together, and say, “And of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

I made Christina try it this way. She laughed a bit at first. Then, she thought the idea was terrific. We made love and it was really great. She was greater than ever. We were both relaxed. Easy.

I wrote John Paul this suggestion. Maybe he doesn't like to touch his navel. A lot of people maybe feel like that. I'd like for him to bring my proposal to worldwide attention.

Christina and I do it this way every night now, and our lovemaking has improved.

It's a suggestion. If anything happens, I don't want any credit. I got what I want already.