“Made in China” for the Catholic Church – What’s Wrong With This Picture?

My husband and I were recently in New York for a few days to enjoy the Christmas trees, window displays, and decorations. While visiting St. Patrick’s Cathedral, I planned to buy a gift for my grand niece who will be receiving her First Communion in May. I was shocked to see that a music box commemorating a child’s First Communion (as well as many other items) were made in China. It was a shock that the Catholic Church would choose to have its religious items made in China, a country with a dismal human rights record. Cheap labor and costs should not be the determining factor in this situation. I decided to write the following letter to the Archbishop of New York:

“My husband and I very much enjoyed our recent visit to St. Patrick’s Cathedral.

However, when we visited the gift shop, I was both surprised and disappointed to find that a music box for a child’s First Communion was “made in China.” I could not, in good conscience, purchase a First Communion music box knowing it was made in such a God-less country.

Of course I recognize that just about everything we purchase is now made in China, but I would’ve expected the Catholic Church to be a bit more concerned about the atrocious policies of China than in saving a few dollars by having its religious items made in a country which orders the murder its own children.

The Catholic Church must be aware of China’s one-child and state-mandated abortion policies.
On Christmas Day, the Denver Post included an article about a Chinese woman who found herself pregnant with a second child. In order to evade the one-child rule, she divorced her husband and married her cousin the next day. She hoped to take advantage of a loophole that allowed divorced parents to have a second child if their new spouse was a first-time parent. However, she learned that the conception had to take place after the marriage and was told to abort the baby and start over again. Rather than face the prospect of an abortion, she fled the village to avoid authorities who would’ve, no doubt, forced her to have the abortion. She communicated with her (first) husband through a password-protected online journal which kept him apprised of her location until she reached Shanghai where she eventually gave birth to their second child.

The article also describes how violators of the one-child policy have to pay four to nine times a family’s annual income. A physics teacher was no longer allowed to teach after his second child was born. When he refused to pay the fine of $37,500, he was denied a household registration permit for his son, forcing him to pay three times more for kindergarten. The father, himself, struggled to make ends meet as a freelance chess teacher.

Every clear thinking person should recognize China’s one-child and state-mandated abortion policies as horrific and unacceptable. Under no circumstances should abortion be the answer to population control.

It pains me that abortion is legal in this country; however, it is not forced upon women by our government, and we, fortunately, do not have a state-mandated policy limiting the number of children parents may have in this country as does China.

I would respectfully ask that you examine the Church’s policy of manufacturing and importing these items
from China and consider finding a manufacturer in this
country.”

I received the following reply from Cardinal-designate Timothy
M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York:

“While I understand your concern about the sale of products
in the cathedral gift shop that are manufactured in China, I
do not believe that, in doing so, the gift shop is in any
sense giving its approval to the Chinese government or any
of its policies that are directly contrary to the teachings
of our faith. Though the mandated abortion and one-child
policies of the Chinese government are extreme, your
argument could actually be extended to any nation that has
legalized abortion, including the United States.”

While I appreciate the Archbishop’s response to my letter, I
would respectfully disagree with his assessment. I’m not an
expert on the Chinese economic system but I have to believe
that the Communist Party and its policies play an enormous
role in almost every aspect of Chinese life.

At least in the United States, our government, no matter how
involved in commerce it is at this point, does not limit the
number of children parents may have or force its citizens to
kill their babies.

As a single consumer, I find it almost impossible to buy
anything that isn’t made in China. The Catholic Church, with
all its financial resources, should be able to set an example
by purchasing goods elsewhere.

I still don’t get it, but if you do, God bless you.