

Rocker Tom Petty Says Some Christians Have Christ All Wrong

With a new song, Tom Petty has ventured into the well-plowed field of Christian bashing. The track, called “Playing Dumb,” takes to task the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church for how it has handled the long-running priest sex-abuse scandal.

In the lyrics, he proposes lighting a candle “For every confession that wasn’t on the level/ For every man of God that lives with hidden devils.”

The song mourns the victims of sex abuse at the hands of some Catholic clergy and takes aim at the controversial financial settlements the church eventually made. Pope Francis has estimated that 2 percent of priests may be pedophiles.

While the song didn’t make his band’s new album, *Hypnotic Eye*—it was hard to sequence with the rest of the tracks, says Petty—it will be included as a bonus cut on the accompanying vinyl release, according to a profile of the frontman for The Heartbreakers in *Billboard* magazine.

In other comments during his *Billboard* interview, Petty blames many people’s misinterpretation of God as being behind “all wars.” Then he leaps to an outlandish conclusion that no one misunderstands Jesus more than Christians.

“Religion seems to me to be at the base of all wars,” continues Petty. “I’ve nothing against defending yourself, but I don’t think, spiritually speaking, that there’s any conception of God that should be telling you to be violent. It seems to me that no one’s got Christ more wrong than the Christians.”

Petty, 63, was born and raised in Gainesville, Florida, but now calls Southern California home. He says he was raised “unconvinced” among Southern Baptists.

When asked about “Playing Dumb,” Petty arches an eyebrow at the digital recorder before him, *Billboard* wrote. “Catholics, don’t write me,” he pleads rhetorically. “I’m fine with whatever religion you want to have, but it can’t tell anybody it’s OK to kill people, and it can’t abuse children systematically for God knows how many years.”

Petty continues, “If I was in a club, and I found out that there had been generations of people abusing children, and then that club was covering that up, I would quit the club. And I wouldn’t give them any more money.

“I just felt that I was being asked to play dumb,” says Petty, describing how the song emerged. “That, ‘OK, well, they paid some money, so it’s all over.’ I don’t trust that.”

On the other hand, Petty seems to speak the heart of Jesus when he rails against the never-have-enough selfishness of some of the mega-rich. “That’s a huge problem in the world right now,” *Billboard* quotes him as saying. “You can see these wealthy people who have made so much money that making more will not change an hour of their lives or their children’s—yet they’re consumed with the idea of making more. Once they do that long enough, that doesn’t turn them on anymore. They want power, and a great deal of money buys power. Very few people know how to handle power and once they just become completely immoral, they’re dangerous people. This attitude is what, to me, wipes out the middle class.”