

The Church and Homosexuality: Part III

By Greg Witherow

Gay marriage and abortion are now the two flashpoints in the American Culture War. To speak publicly against the gay agenda is to increasingly risk loud, vitriolic anger from the gay and lesbian lobby. While there is much rancor that swirls around legal rights and the tax code, the debate boils down to one word. Marriage. Access to this word gives gays both affirmation and equality. Gays have therefore made their demands plain; **all the legal rights minus the status of marriage will not suffice**. One argument against gay marriage is that it will undermine traditional heterosexual marriage. But the gay lobby asks how can this be so? In what way does gay marriage harm heterosexual marriage? The Church must address such purposes and claims, as they are fair points. In doing so the response must be twofold. First, historic Christian dogmas must be rearticulated to catechize the Church, as many Christians are increasingly unsure of historic teaching. Secondly, a secular apologetic must be used to draw the un-Churched to truth that is by definition universal. While in Athens, Saint Paul went to the Areopagus and reasoned with the Athenians by appealing to their gods and poets. In doing so he found common ground in order to establish a dialogue. Here we briefly restate the Catholic position on marriage and then speak to the un-Churched appealing to their Reason and their poets.

The Catholic Position on Marriage

The Catholic Church affirms that marriage is between a man and woman, regardless of whether the marriage is sacramental or civil¹. It is not just that gay couples can never marry in the eyes of the Church; the point is gay marriage is a fiction as it violates the laws of Nature and of God². It is akin to making laws declaring unborn babies are non-people with no right to live. It is likewise akin to Atheist states declaring God does not exist. Despite such laws, people instinctively know such laws are not true.

However, over time people can condition themselves to be blind to the truth. A hardness of heart develops where natural instincts, intuitively understood from birth are muted. In a zeal to be free of God's law many seek to suppress the truth. Saint Paul writes,

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. **For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them**. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse... for this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women **exchanged the natural relations for unnatural**, and the men likewise **gave up natural relations** with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”³

¹ Protestants don't distinguish between sacramental & civil marriage (not to be confused with civil unions).

² CCC 1603

³ Romans 1:18-23 and 26-27 in the Revised Standard Version

The Gay Creed

But not all gay apologists *entirely* reject an appeal to God. Yet all gay apologists reject *historical* Christian teaching. And as such gay apologists primarily use secular arguments for their Creeds. The following is an attempt to state the gay position as fairly and accurately as possible. It might go as follows:

As a person's sexual identity is **determined at birth**, gay couples have the right to **live as they please** (as long as no 3rd party is harmed) and to have the same access to the laws governing civil marriage as other citizens do. **As the right to marriage is inalienable to all Humankind**⁴, the denial of this right is an act of discrimination. Such bigotry is based on either willful ignorance, hatred or both.

This Creed is sometimes followed by the question:

If gay people practice gay marriage, how does this damage heterosexuals who practice traditional marriage?

This Creed and pop quiz have effectively framed the debate, often muting the opposition. Armed with such tenets gay marriage is increasingly seen as reasonable, especially amongst the young. Minus Scripture or the Catechism, how should Catholics respond?

Appeal To A Higher Authority

One of the premises of gay apologists is that inalienable rights exist which trump the Will of the People. By definition such are rights not contingent upon the laws, customs or beliefs of a particular society or polity. The Church concurs such rights exist. But she insists these rights come from God, not Man. The United States Declaration of Independence justifies the American Revolution on inalienable rights, citing their source.

“When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to **which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them**, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are **endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights**, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

⁴ California state Attorney General Jerry Brown is using this argument in building a case that the newly ratified California state constitution (outlawing gay marriage) is unconstitutional. He may argue that the US Constitution gives Californians inalienable rights. And if not the US Constitution then the United Nations. But ultimately the Gay Lobby believes their rights trump any national laws or constitutions. This is why gays sometimes refer to marriage as a “sacred” inalienable right. It is a religious value.

To our point, if the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God are the source of inalienable rights, is gay marriage one of them? This is difficult for gay apologists to prove. Why? The writings of Judaism, Islam and Christianity speak against gay marriage. Natural Law is problematic as **procreative instincts are universal and necessary** for the survival of humanity. And historical precedence gives no aid. Instead, gay apologists seek a back door to inalienable rights by establishing the existence of a gay ethnicity. An ethnicity is claimed with the following assertions, one appealing to God, the other not. They are:

- “This is the way God made me” OR “This is the way I was born”

These assertions are important for two reasons. First, if the gay cause can **qualify to be one of civil rights – the cause can credibly claim inalienable rights**. If homosexuality is established as equivalent to ethnicity (like being an African-American) it is difficult to make a moral case against gay marriage. Secondly, **such claims end all ethical debate**. If God or Nature designed people to be gay from birth, how can acting on such designs be labeled immoral? It's a nice package. Such assertions simultaneously establish gay rights as civil rights while effectively tabling the moral ethics debate.

But these assertions prove problematic in a few ways. First, science has not show people are born with a gay gene. If it was so, **you can be sure it would be proclaimed from the mountaintops**. Merely asserting over and over again a gay gene exists is no proof. Secondly, being born a certain way is not a ticket to rights. For example, people born with Down syndrome are often denied drivers licenses because their driving would pose a risk to society. If gay marriage can be shown to put society at risk, those rights can be limited. Thirdly, the duty to make moral decisions cannot be cast aside. If a pedophile gene is found, a person born with it has a moral duty to deny his “ethnicity” and abstain from such acts. Despite “ethnicity”, **behavior is always a matter of ethics**. The point being, just because “God made somebody that way” (if that is indeed the case) is not a ticket to unchecked behavior. Behavior is always measured against social costs.

But a gay apologist would declare these examples are invalid. It is clear that pedophiles hurt other people, as do drivers whose judgment is impaired. How does gay marriage put society at risk? This is a fair question. Let's examine this question.

Truth Or Consequences

While it is heterosexuals that have inflicted much damage to marriage through infidelities, divorce, contraception and co-habitation gay marriage will open the final floodgates in making marriage meaningless. How so? If it is true that consenting adults have the right to do as they please - then there is no moral case against polygamy, group marriages (why not three women?) or incest (why not two brothers?)⁵. The point isn't these unions are all moral equivalents (they are not). The point is allowing for one is to allow for all. Discarding such possibilities as remote or only rare is to live in Fairy Land.

⁵ In a December 23, 2008 Washington Post column, Richard Cohen was offended when gay marriage was compared to incestuous marriage. But if the incest is between **consenting adults**, what is he outraged about? Cohen fails to see that yesterdays outrage is today's human right.

Foreseeing such prospects we can see how a Progressive Morality might impact society. First, it is a fact that **amoral practices never affect only the consenting parties**. Try legalizing drugs or prostitution in your part of town and see what happens. Have your children attend sex education classes where sexual constraints between consenting adults is labeled “bigotry” - and see if it has affect on your kids. Open a strip of casinos and see if it impacts only The Consenting in your community. People are not moral islands isolated from the actions of others. Society is swayed by the attitudes and actions of its members. In economics there is a thing called Gresham’s Law. It states, “bad money chases out the good”. It can just as easily apply to morality. Bad morals chase out the good. Over the last 50 years bad morals practiced by The Consenting have driven good morals from the public square. True, some moral progress has been made (think civil rights for African-Americans), **but only where Christian principles** are made to bear on the public zeitgeist. But the societal wreckage of a diminished moral code **is undeniable**.

A second casualty of a Progressive Morality will be a loss of freedom to speak out in the public square. If homosexuality is the legal equivalent to African-American ethnicity, speaking against it will have consequences. To openly state such marriages are immoral **will be labeled Hate Speech** that incites violence. In such a world, how are Christians speaking against gay marriage different from the Klan speaking against African-American rights? We need to only look to Canada, where Catholic clergy have already been hauled before Tribunals as their sermons violated Canadian Hate Crime legislation⁶.

A third casualty will be an **increasingly dysfunctional American family**. It is this fruit that most explicitly harms the nation. To pretend a Progressive Morality has strengthened the family (as its apologists claim) with its libertine sexuality is madness. The traditional family has always been the first school and training ground for civil society. **It cannot be replaced**. Where the traditional family structure implodes a Nanny State steps in, complete with its intrusive laws (loss of freedom), increasing taxation (loss of freedom) and burgeoning debt (loss of freedom) to perform functions broken families no longer provide. Such a State cannot sustain itself perpetually.

Summary

Thomas Jefferson (a Deist) recognized the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God as the source of Right (and therefore Wrong). Traditional marriage, *solely* between one man and one woman has long been understood to emanate from such truth. **Once upon a time this was considered Common Sense**. Where practiced faithfully the traditional family has provided a stabilizing anchor in civilization. It is the first school and training ground for civil ethics. It is where parents procreate and raise children who work in industry, pay taxes, start businesses, serve in government and defend our borders. Neither a State nor a Village can replace it. To dismember or weaken this institution **is reckless** and a guarantee (in the long run) of a dysfunctional society practicing a dysfunctional morality. We weaken it at our own peril.

⁶ To read how this has happened see this link: <http://catholicexchange.com/2008/06/04/112780/>