

BISHOP PAPROCKI UNFAIRLY MALIGNED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comes to the defense of Springfield, Illinois Bishop Thomas Paprocki:

It's a sign of the collapse of civility in the culture that insult and invective have taken the place of reasoned discourse. Bishop Thomas Paprocki releases a decree on "manifest sinners" in the Catholic Church who are giving "public scandal," and for that he is being called "mean-spirited" and "cruel"; some dissidents have called for him to resign. Instead of being condemned, he should be commended.

The proximate issue before Bishop Paprocki is the Catholic status of a man who claims to be married to a man, and a woman who claims to be married to a woman.

From time immemorial, the *whole world* knew that it was objectively impossible for two people of the same sex to marry—they cannot procreate nor can they act as natural surrogates to children who have lost their father and mother—but that has recently changed in some quarters of civil society. It has not changed in the Catholic Church.

Bishop Paprocki, an esteemed canon lawyer, ruled that it would not be appropriate for Church officials to recognize these "marriages."

This means, among other things, that men and women who claim to be married to a person of the same sex should not present themselves for Holy Communion, and should be denied this sacrament if they persist.

Similarly, funeral rites should not be extended to those who have "lived openly in a same-sex marriage before their death," the exception being if "they have given some signs of

repentance before their death.” Children who find themselves in these unions should not generally be denied the sacraments.

Notice that Bishop Paprocki did not rule against homosexuals and lesbians. Indeed, in a statement clarifying his decree, Bishop Paprocki said, “People with same-sex attraction are welcome in our parishes in the Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois as we repent our sins and pray for God to keep us in His grace.”

So what was he getting at in his decree? He is talking about those who are “living openly” in same-sex “marriages.” Let me quote from Edward N. Peters, a prominent canon lawyer, who has addressed this subject.

“Paprocki’s decree is *not* aimed at a category of persons (homosexuals, lesbians, LGBT, etc., words that do not even appear in his document) but rather, it is concerned with an *act*, a *public* act, an act that creates a civilly-recognized *status*, namely, the *act* of entering into a ‘same-sex marriage.’” (His italics.)

No matter, there are still some who say that Bishop Paprocki is picking on gays. This is easy to disprove.

Consider the following sentence: “Canon law makes it clear that funerals should be refused to ‘manifest sinners to whom a Church funeral could not be granted without public scandal to the faithful.’”

That sentence appears below the headline of a 2015 article in the *Catholic Herald*. The headline reads, “The Italian Church Must Stop Carrying Out Mafia Funerals.”

The issue is not gays—it is “manifest sinners” who are giving “public scandal to the faithful.” That would include the mafia, as well as those of the same sex who claim to be married.

Regarding the mafia, it is worth recalling that Pope Francis excommunicated the mobsters in 2014. He has also spoken out against same-sex “marriages,” and has done so repeatedly.

Bishop Paprocki wants to offer clarity to the faithful on Church teachings. That is his job and he does it exceedingly well. We are lucky to have him.