

LANCE BERKMAN'S RELIGIOUS RIGHTS ATTACKED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on gay activists who are attacking the free speech and religious liberty rights of former St. Louis Cardinals player Lance Berkman:

Not too long ago it would be considered perverse to say that men have a right to use the restrooms and shower facilities reserved for women. Today, the reverse is true. Ask Lance Berkman, the former St. Louis Cardinals slugger.

The St. Louis Cardinals has hosted Christian Day for nearly three decades, and this year, as in the past, they have invited Berkman. But because he is opposed to men and women using the bathrooms and shower facilities of the opposite sex—it's almost always cross-dressing men who want to crash the ladies room—the Cardinals are being condemned by homosexuals and other sexual minorities.

Even sports columnists have gotten into the act. Bill Baer of NBC Sports writes that "In September 2015, Berkman foolishly advocated against public accommodations for transgender people to use public bathrooms," saying such persons were "troubled men."

There is nothing "foolish" about supporting the privacy rights of women, but there is something seriously wrong about objections to it. Two years ago, Berkman walked back his comment about transgender persons being "troubled men," though there was no good reason why he should have.

He clarified his remark saying, "The issue is, what to do about a 15 or 16-year-old boy who thinks he's a girl and wants to shower with the girls? Maybe he is [transgender], maybe he's confused. But I wouldn't want him in the shower with my

daughters.”

What Berkman said is common sense and a tribute to common decency. No normal father would want his high school daughter showering with a boy. But we live in an age where the sacred and the profane have switched places, and common sense has all but collapsed.

When Berkman was asked about a person who identifies with the opposite sex, he said, “You’re taking their word for it, saying that’s the way they’re born...maybe there’s a science that backs that up. I don’t know.”

There is no science to back this nonsense up. Dr. Lawrence S. Mayer is an epidemiologist trained in psychiatry, and Dr. Paul R. McHugh is one of the nation’s preeminent psychiatrists; the former is scholar in residence in the Department of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and the latter was psychiatrist-in-chief at the Johns Hopkins Hospital for 25 years, and is a colleague of Mayer in the same department.

They have researched sexuality for decades, and their findings on transgender persons are revealing. “The hypothesis that gender identity is an innate, fixed property of human beings that is independent of biological sex—that a person might be ‘a man trapped in a woman’s body’ or ‘a woman trapped in a man’s body’—is not supported by scientific evidence.” Their conclusion is based on empirical data, not politics.

These are important points, but they are not the most critical.

There are two reasons why Berkman deserves to be defended. One, he is exercising his free speech rights, and nothing he has said is untoward. Second, his religious rights are paramount.

Regarding the latter, when asked to explain his position,

Berkman said he felt it necessary “to stand up for Christ.” And for this some want him silenced! Sadly, our society is no longer committed to the First Amendment as it once was.

Religious leaders across faith lines have a moral duty to support Berkman and beat back the forces of censorship. If we don’t stand with those who “stand up for Christ,” we are the problem.