

ARCHBISHOP DOLAN RAISES KEY MARITAL ISSUES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the July 7 blog post by New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan:

Archbishop Dolan correctly notes that within days of the New York State legislature's decision to affirm homosexual marriage, some enthusiasts were already upping the ante, asking us to consider "nonmonogamy." Dolan's critics think he is falsely sounding the alarm. He isn't.

When the U.S. Supreme Court rejected precedent and decided to invent a right to sodomy (see *Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003), Justice Scalia wrote in dissent that everything from bigamy to bestiality could now be justified in light of this ruling. After all, if moral choice is the only operative principle, then on what basis can we tell Sam and Sally, brother and sister, that they cannot marry? This is not a matter of idle speculation: in the wake of *Lawrence*, attempts to legalize polygamy and incest were made, and it is just a matter of time before some enlightened judge decides it's necessary to break new ground.

If anything, Archbishop Dolan understates the problem. Five years ago, hundreds of prominent professors, lawyers, writers and activists signed a statement, "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision For All Our Families & Relationships," that was a veritable declaration of war on marriage. Every conceivable relationship was to merit state approval. For example, it said, "Queer couples and siblings who decide to jointly create and raise a child with another queer person or couple, in two households," should be afforded the same protections as marriage, traditionally understood. These zealots even went so far as to say that such arrangements should be given *private* [read: religious] recognition.

Archbishop Dolan did us a favor by issuing this wake-up call. Sadly, he does not exaggerate, not by one bit.

BISHOPS BLASTED OVER GAY MARRIAGE

Responding to growing attacks on Catholic bishops over the issue of same-sex marriage is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

The passage of a same-sex marriage bill in New York, over the objections of the Catholic hierarchy, has led to a storm of criticism of the state's bishops. The most extreme condemnation comes from a July 5 editorial in the *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*.

The Catholic hierarchy, says *NCR*, "has lost most of its credibility with the wider culture on matters of sexuality and personal morality, just as it has lost its authority within the Catholic community on the same issues." The bishops are guilty of engaging in everything from "wholesale excommunications" to "open warfare" with dissidents.

The popular "out-of-touch" criticism of the bishops on gay marriage rests on two faulty assumptions: (a) there is a divide between the bishops and the faithful on this issue, and (b) the bishops should take their cues from the laity.

To begin with, there is a profound difference between the views of practicing Catholics and nominal ones. There is also a divide between what the public tells a pollster and the results in a ballot box. In the 31 states where the voters were given the opportunity to decide on gay marriage, many of the polls going into the election showed that the supporters would carry the day. The final tally was 31-0 against gay marriage. New Yorkers were denied a ballot initiative. Moreover, a Siena College poll taken just before the vote in the legislature showed only a minority of Catholics in favor of this idea.

More important, the bishops have a different charge: they are obligated to do what is morally right. But if *NCR* wants the

bishops to follow the laity, is it prepared to have the hierarchy junk its rejection of the death penalty? After all, two-thirds of Catholics want those guilty of a capital offense to be fried, so why not the bishops? Will *NCR* now campaign for the death penalty, lecturing the bishops to get in line with the rank-and-file? Its hypocrisy is stunning

“THE LEDGE” SELLS ATHEISM

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on “The Ledge,” a movie that opens July 8 in Los Angeles and New York City:

People of faith, especially Catholics, are used to being trashed by Hollywood, but they are not accustomed to films that promote atheism. Yes, there was “The Golden Compass,” an atheism-for-kids effort which the Catholic League successfully boycotted (in fairness, it was the book upon which the movie was based that triggered our response, not the screen adaptation). “The Ledge” is different in that its backers are selling themselves as the real pioneers: they expect it to be a ground-breaker. In short, they are relying on its potential fan base accessing the film through Video on Demand (it opens in only two theaters).

The characters in the movie are utterly predictable. Gavin’s loss of faith deepened after his wife blamed him when their daughter was killed in an accident. Because he believes in nothing, he is the good guy. Gavin has an affair with an evangelical’s wife—you guessed it, the evangelical is a close-minded homophobe—leaving the poor gal (played by Liv Tyler) in a mess. You see, she was once a prostitute before her husband (himself a former alcoholic and drug abuser) introduced her to God. In any event, after Mr. Intolerant, the evangelical, discovers the affair, he tells Gavin to jump from a ledge or he’ll kill both of them, including himself.

Matthew Chapman is the writer and director. "God-fearing straight men have had a monopoly for a very long time," he says, "and many peculiar decisions have been made." Among the most peculiar, historically speaking, is something Chapman doesn't want to admit: it was the Judeo-Christian ethos of America that accounts for the unprecedented levels of justice and freedom enjoyed by non-believers.

Chapman is an atheist and the great-great grandson of Charles Darwin. Darwin, it should be noted, was a self-described agnostic. He once said to a dogmatic atheist, Edward Aveling, "Why should you be so aggressive? Is anything gained by trying to force these new ideas upon the mass of mankind?" Too bad Chapman didn't learn that lesson.