

“CATHOLIC” GAY GROUP CHASTISED

The following is an excerpt from a recent joint statement of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and the Minnesota Catholic Conference:

“A group calling itself ‘Catholics for Marriage Equality MN’ seeks to confuse Catholics and the public about authentic Church teaching related to matters of marriage and sexuality. The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and the Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC) wish to make it known that this group does not speak for the Catholic Church, is not an agent or entity of the Archdiocese, MCC, or the universal Church, and has no authority to determine what does and does not constitute Christian doctrine and morality.”

We issued a press release applauding this statement.

As everyone knows, the term “marriage equality” is code for homosexual marriage. The Catholic Church, no surprise, is opposed to treating marriage as an alternative lifestyle. It follows, then, that a group which calls itself “Catholics for Marriage Equality” is a fraud. Another fraud is this group’s sister organization, “Catholics for Equality.” There was still another fraud, “Catholics United for Equality,” but it has since merged with “Catholics for Equality.”

No one really believes that two men can marry, and this includes those homosexuals deemed “married” in states that entertain this fiction. But a separate matter is the right of homosexuals, and their heterosexual supporters, to declare that Catholicism is somehow agnostic on this issue. It is not. There is only one teaching body in the Catholic Church, the Magisterium, and it neither recognizes nor sanctions social arrangements that compete with marriage.

Kudos to the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and the Minnesota Catholic Conference for bringing clarity to an issue that some have tried to muddle.

FORDHAM SEX CONFERENCE BOMBS

In the last edition of *Catalyst*, we informed our readers of a conference on sexual diversity in the Catholic Church that was held at Fordham University. After seeing some of the reviews of the event, we called it a bomb.

Just a hundred or so curious souls bothered to show up, and though the event was mostly a failure, it did have its moments. They heard from someone who confessed how he mutilated his genitals, and others so depressed they made the mutilator sound normal. Indeed, some of the tales would have even made Rod Serling's head spin.

Father John Dufell was there to give advice: when asked by a homosexual how he is supposed to deal with his inadmissibility to become a priest, Dufell told him to lie. He said it was okay to lie because it is the "system" in the Church that is broken.

One poor soul who attended sounded absolutely virginal: "I expected it to be a discussion of church teaching, but instead it kind of assumed that church teaching was wrong—and I wasn't expecting that." Didn't he know where he was?

In any event, it was nice to learn that Erma Durkin, who traveled all the way from Maryland, found the sessions "very encouraging." Erma is 82.

WHY DEMOCRATS REJECT MORMONS

A recent Quinnipiac poll asked if the U.S. is ready for a Mormon president? Among Republicans, 68 percent say they are comfortable with the idea; this is slightly higher than the 64 percent of independents who say they are okay with such a choice; however, only 49 percent of Democrats say they are ready for a Mormon president.

While it is difficult to explain the uneasiness among some independents, there are plenty of data showing why some Republicans, and most Democrats, don't want a Mormon in the White House. Among Republicans, there are some evangelicals who have a theological problem with a Mormon being president; they do not regard Mormons as Christians, and that belief is controlling. But theology means relatively little to carping Democrats—most believe in nothing. Ergo, something else is at work.

After examining survey data, Baruch College political scientists Louis Bolce and Gerry De Maio have shown that for the past several decades Democrats have been the most secular segment of the population. Moreover, in 2006, a Pew survey showed that only 26 percent of the public thought the Democrats were “friendly to religion.” What's at work here is sociology, not theology.

To shine more light on this issue, consider that Bolce and De Maio found that 53 percent of secularists have a negative attitude toward the Catholic Church. Moreover, as virtually everyone knows, secularists are not exactly fond of evangelicals, either. Now put it all together. Catholics, Mormons and evangelicals are joined at the hip in the culture war in their support for the rights of the unborn and the

integrity of marriage and the family, traditionally defined. Secular Democrats hate both.

In other words, intolerance marks liberal Democrats more than any other segment of the population, accounting for their rejection of a Mormon as president.

“PRO-CHILD” BILL IS ANTI-CATHOLIC

The “Every Child Deserves a Family Act” seeks to deny federal funds to any adoption agency that “discriminates” against prospective adoptive or foster parents on the basis of sexual orientation. When we caught wind of this bill, we immediately called its purpose into question.

The proponents of the bill manifestly do not believe that every child deserves a family: only those lucky enough to make it to term qualify. Indeed, of the 69 cosponsors of the bill, 96 percent are pro-abortion. In other words, they are deceitfully playing the “pro-child” card while disguising their real agenda, which is to stick it to the Catholic Church.

Of all religions, the Catholic Church has the greatest network of adoptive and foster parent agencies. Like almost all other religions, the Church believes that marriage should be the reserve of a man and a woman, the only two people capable of creating a family. This bill, however, does not recognize the legitimacy of this ancient verity. Worse, it seeks to punish those who do not accept, as a matter of conscience, homosexuals as adoptive or foster parents.

Fully a third of the cosponsors are Catholic, though most have long broken with Catholic teachings on public policy issues. All but one of the cosponsors is a Democrat. The lone Republican, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, is not only in favor of homosexuals adopting children, she cosponsored the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act, a bill signed by President Clinton to protect this basic social institution.

Ros-Lehtinen switched from Catholic to Episcopalian a few years ago. But it is not her activism as a Christian that has won her awards—it is her commitment to Scientology that has drawn kudos. It is clear that her new affiliations coincide with her newly acquired liberal voting record (her scores from liberal and conservative groups have flip-flopped in recent years). In any event, her new colors are disturbing.

DISCERNING THE LAY VOCATION

Deacon Keith Fournier

Living the Call: An Introduction to the Lay Vocation by Michael Novak and William Simon, Jr., Encounter Books.

Blessed John Paul II used the parable of the workers in the vineyard as the framework within which to address the nature of a lay vocation. “The gospel parable sets before our eyes the Lord’s vast vineyard and the multitude of persons,” he wrote, “both women and men, who are called and sent forth by him to labor in it.” He was speaking of Matthew (13:38): “The vineyard is the whole world.”

The Holy Father made clear that “A new state of affairs today, both in the Church and in social, economic, political and cultural life, calls with a particular urgency for the action

of the lay faithful. If lack of commitment is always unacceptable, the present time renders it even more so. It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle.”

Over many years, and through seasons of service, the conviction that we are all called into the vineyard has directed my life choices. In 1996, I discerned a call to say “yes” to an invitation of the Lord. On the Feast of the Body and Blood of the Lord, I was called to Holy Orders as a Catholic Deacon. Deacons are a bridge from the lay faithful in the world to the rest of the hierarchy (Bishops and Priests) and from the hierarchy to the lay faithful. We have a special role in assisting the lay faithful to both understand and live out their own vocation.

For years I have searched for material which helps lay Catholics come to understand the dignity and implications of their vocation. So, when my friend Bill Donohue asked me to review a book entitled, *Living the Call: An Introduction to the Lay Vocation*, written by Michael Novak and William E. Simon Jr., I assented.

I am glad I did. I have finally found the book for which I have been searching all these years. I have not stopped recommending it since. It is a must read for every Catholic.

After inspiring introductions from the two lay authors, the first half of the book introduces the reader to the lay vocation. It does so through a solid explanation of its theological ground. However, and even more importantly, we are then introduced to nine lay men and women who live out the vocation sacrificially. These real life stories put legs on the theology by giving us a glimpse into the various portions of the vineyard in which the lay vocation is lived.

In education we meet Elias Josue who teaches at St. Rose in Denver and shows us that “Catholic schools are the way we bring people into the Church.” Then, former Principal Mary

Baier shows us that Catholic education is “not a job; it’s a ministry.” Finally, we meet one of my personal heroes, Peter Flanigan, the champion of the school choice movement, who understands and lives the teaching of the Church on solidarity.

In parish life we meet Cambria Smith, a parish life director; Mike Witka, who turned “an avocation into a vocation” overseeing business affairs and personnel; and Kathelle Kichline, a Pastoral Associate. Each offers a compelling story of faith and response. However, in this section, the distinction between the ministerial priesthood, and the priesthood of the faithful, was not as clearly explained as I wish it had been.

Next we are introduced to the array of lay ministries flourishing in the Catholic Church. We meet a lay Jesuit volunteer, Nicholas Collura, who recognizes Christ in the needy. Next, Marcie Moran, whose ministry to the dying and the grieving and work in marriage preparation and counseling is heartfelt. Finally, Ansel Augustine, whose vibrant vision of youth ministry provides a window into one of the most important parts of the growing lay involvement in the ministry of the Church.

However, the second part of the book, entitled “The Search Within,” does more than put legs on the lay vocation: it uncovers the heart of every Christian vocation, a deep interior life. One of my favorite theologians of the early Church, a monk named Evagrius of Pontus, once wrote that a theologian is one who rests his head on the breast of Christ. The image evokes the beloved disciple John.

It points to the common element in the stories told in the first half of the book. Each of the men and women we met has a deep, abiding and personal relationship with the Lord. That relationship comes from living in the Lord by living in the communion of the Church which is His Body.

The first part of the second half of the book provides one of the most beautiful expositions on the interior life I have read. Using short quotes from great classics in the Catholic Tradition, the authors open the reader to further pursuit by increasing our thirst for more. The material increases the spiritual hunger at the core of contemplation.

It offers a lay spirituality rooted in love, nourished by the Eucharist, sustained by spiritual reading, kept alive by intimate prayer and sustained by the Sacraments and the Word of God. I sincerely encourage the authors to expand the material in this half of the book into another complete book.

If they were to choose to do so, it could become a classic for generations to come. Their explanation of the Incarnation and the nature of the Church was exquisite. This kind of theology, faithful as well as accessible, is desperately needed in this hour.

The second part of the second half discusses oblates and associations. However, it does not mention the ecclesial movements which have sprung up in the Church since the Council and have been praised by recent Popes. They provide a base of support for many lay men and women who live the message of this book, the universal call to holiness and the missionary calling of every Baptized Christian.

Chapter nine provides a summary of the single life and marriage through the lens of vocation. The exposition of married life is one of the finest summaries of what is referred to in shorthand as the "theology of the body" which I have read. Blessed John Paul II preferred that his body of expository writing in this area be called "Human Love in the Divine Plan," and the author's insights show why that is a much more apropos shorthand title.

The last two chapters, "Teach all Nations," and "To Rebuild all Things in Christ," were the only unsatisfying part of this

otherwise wonderful book. I say unsatisfying because they were simply too short. I am convinced the authors could write Volume Two of *Living the Call* in which they explain—through examples and accessible teaching—how lay men and women play a vital role in the ongoing teaching and social justice work of the whole Church. I hope they do just that.

Deacon Keith Fournier is the editor of Catholic Online and serves on the Catholic League's board of advisors. A constitutional lawyer, he was appointed the first executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a public interest law firm founded by Rev. Pat Robertson.

Fournier is currently pursuing a doctorate at the Catholic University of America.