

OPINIONS

Pastor's survey draws response

Loving people doesn't require condoning sin

To the editors:

The issue of homosexual relationships within the church will be a focus of the new millennium. How we respond to brothers in Christ like Father Robert Collins (Sept. 21) will have a significant influence in shaping the view of that church.

Father Collins suggests that many persons engaged in pastoral counseling no longer consider abstinence from homosexual behavior to be a practical pastoral aim. I am neither counselor nor priest, so I may be labeled ignorant; however, I have personally witnessed many who have renounced this lifestyle through counseling and have been set free. Yet most people never hear these testimonies, unfortunately. What I believe we are seeing in these latter days is a Church drifting toward the misconception that

love means not being tough, and is giving in to a humanistic society which says, "There's no way out."

There are those that contend that St. Paul's inspired letter to the Romans, where he chastises men and women entering into same-sex relationships, is not valid teaching (Romans 1:26,27). However, to be consistent with the literal interpretation of such basic scriptural tenets as Jesus' death and resurrection, and His physical presence in the Eucharist, the interpretation is legitimately clear: Engagement in same-sex unions is not what God has intended — and God has not changed with the '90s. In fact, even if we overlook Scripture, it does not take a scholar to recognize that the basic anatomy of both male and female does not lend itself to a natural same-sex union.

It is true, the issue of sexual sin does not stop with homosexual behavior. It can be just as prevalent between a man and woman, married or not, who engage in actions which are not Christ-like. However, living together outside of marriage is almost looked on as the norm by society today; and the persona of the

extramarital affair is preached over the airwaves into our homes nightly. One does not have to think too hard to understand why acceptance of perverse lifestyles is making such gains in this "enlightened" society.

Unequivocally, we need to show the homosexual person respect and love. They need to be welcomed into our churches. We have no right to condemn any homosexual person, but that does not mean that we must accept their sexual behavior as normal. Those who truly want out need to be directed toward Sexaholics Anonymous and Twelve-Step programs, as well as ministries such as Malachi Group through Brighton Presbyterian Church. Then, and only then, can we truly offer these folks genuine love.

If there is an interest in professional commentary on the subject, I would recommend "Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality" by Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D., a Catholic, who is a licensed clinical psychologist. Dr. Nicolosi has counseled many gay men and has the research and practical experience to back up what he says.

One final note: While I may not agree



with Father Collins, I applaud him for bringing this issue out of the closet. Most of our churches won't even touch it. He at least has had the courage to solicit dialogue.

Richard D. Stoffel
Rochester

Church teaching often misunderstood due to omissions

To the editors:

Regarding Father Robert Collins' letter, here are some positive church teachings on homosexuality, teachings many Catholics may not be aware of:

The 1994 Catechism says, "The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual orientation..."

The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1986 said, "the particular inclination of a homosexual person is not a sin... (T)he Church... refuses to consider the person as a 'heterosexual' or a 'homosexual' and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: the creature of God, and by grace, (God's) child and heir to eternal life."

In March, 1995, Cardinal George Basil Hume, reminding us that we're dealing with real people and not an abstract issue, said: "When two persons love they experience in a limited manner in this world what will be their unending delight when one with God in the next.... To love another is in fact to reach out to God, who shares (God's) lovableness with the one we love. To love another, whether of the same sex or of a different sex, is to have entered the area of the richest human experience."

The church also recognizes that not all gay and lesbian people have the gift of celibacy which church teaching expects of them. So the English and Welsh Bishops in 1980 said: "Pastoral care does not consist simply in the rigid and automatic application of moral norms. It con-

siders the individual in his (or her) actual situation, with all his (or her) strengths and weaknesses. The decision of conscience... can only be made after prudent consideration of the real situation as well as the moral norm... (P)astoral counseling of homophile persons cannot ignore the objective morality of homosexual genital acts, but it is important to interpret them, to understand the pattern of life in which they take place, to appreciate the personal meaning which these acts have for different people.... The pastor may distinguish between irresponsible, indiscriminate sexual activity and the permanent association between two homosexual persons, who feel incapable of enduring a solitary life devoid of sexual expression. This distinction may be borne when offering pastoral advice and

establishing the degree of responsibility..."

Or as the Vatican CDF succinctly put it in 1986, "circumstances may exist... which would reduce or remove the culpability of the individual (engaged in homosexual activity) in a given instance" (writers' emphasis).

And the Washington State Catholic Conference in 1983 reminded us that "even with regard to homogenital activity no one except Almighty God can make certain judgments about the personal sinfulness of acts..."

We have found that church teaching on homosexuality is often misunderstood because the positive side is neglected.

Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata
Linden Street, Rochester

How can a pastor, shepherd of souls invite people to public dissent?

To the editors:

In Answer to Father Collins question of Sept. 21 about your readers' thoughts regarding Church teaching on homosexuality, I would first refer to that teaching as explained in the New Catechism, Section 2357,8,9. Basically, it calls homosexual persons to chastity. With sacramental grace and prayer as well as support from others, they can and should unite their difficulties to Jesus' sacrifice in their struggle toward Christian perfection.

The road to salvation is difficult but

never impossible if we receive the sacraments frequently. Our Holy Father is the Vicar Of Christ on earth and he is inspired by the Holy Spirit. With the Magisterium, he is our guide and leader with regard to Faith and Morals.

How can a priest, who is a shepherd of many parishioners dare to publicly invite people to dissent against those appointed to uphold the truth for our Church? The truth is not relative. It does not change because this is the '90s or for some false compassion for homosexuals. It really is

an injustice to sell people short by telling them that they really cannot live up to God's expectations. It may well be difficult and demand struggle but all of us must fight our own temptations due to our weaknesses from original sin. Jesus gave us the means to overcome but it will cost us some suffering to be sure.

Would a good father tell his son a lie just to save him some discomfort? This would be shameful and he would be shirking his responsibility. Obedience is a virtue we must cultivate; including obedience to the Magisterium; one reason is to counter it's opposite sin of pride.

Pope John Paul II has recently given us the gift of his encyclical "Veritatis Splendor," The Splendor of Truth. All Catholics can purchase this and the New Catechism and be supplied with valuable explanations of your faith. Both the teachings of Jesus and the wisdom of centuries of tradition are clearly defined. This is so

vital in this age of confusion. It is not new material that the Pope created.

Moral theologians are supposed to explain theology to those less knowledgeable but not make up their own theology. They have a great responsibility not to mislead those who look to them for guidance. Our Pope is such a gift to us. Just read about his life and study his writing, watch him on TV, read his homilies and you will realize how extraordinary and holy this Father of our Church in the '90s really is. He is a courageous and saintly priest, who works so hard to communicate to us, the Truth, in a time when the Prince of Darkness is spreading confusion.

I pray that Our Holy Father will be with us a long time. He is such an example of fortitude, humility, patience and charity. We should listen to him and cherish his guidance.

Catherine M. Lennox
Princeton Road, Webster

Scientific evidence points to hereditary origin

To the editors:

I was pleased to see Father Collins' letter in the Sept. 21 issue of the *Catholic Courier*. He addresses an issue that I believe is very important in today's society. As a scientist, I am aware of the growing body of evidence that clearly shows homosexuals do not choose to be homosexuals; it is as much a part of their hereditary makeup as eye or skin color. I am also aware of the history of science that shows believers in a

spherical earth or in a heliocentric model of the solar system were condemned by the church.

If we recognized that sexuality is an important aspect of every human being and that homosexuality is "natural" for those so endowed, the very least we should expect from the church is tolerance. After all, who are we to judge the natural behavior of others?

Professor Joseph D. Novak
Slaterville Road, Ithaca

Catholic Courier

©1995, Rochester Catholic Press Assn., Inc.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark
President

Karen M. Franz
General Manager/Editor

Editorial Department

Lee Strong
Associate Editor
Kathleen Schwar
Copy editor/Staff writer
Finger Lakes

Rob Cullivan, Genesee Valley
Mike Latona, Southern Tier
Staff writers
S. John Wilkin
Staff Photographer

Business Department

Jeanne A. Morin
Circulation Manager

Mary DiPonzio
Office Manager

Lenna Hurley
Administrative Assistant

Advertising Department

Ray Frey
Advertising Director

Ivan Ramos
Ron Granston
Sales Representatives

Graphics Department

Kim Parks
Amy Sundstrom
Graphic Designers