

OPINIONS

Catholic Courier

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Letters Policy

The Catholic Courier wishes to provide space for readers throughout the diocese to express opinions on all sides of the issues. We welcome original, signed letters about current issues affecting church life.

Although we cannot publish every letter we receive, we seek, insofar as possible, to provide a balanced representation of expressed opinions and a variety of reflections on life in the church. We will choose letters for publication based on likely reader interest, timeliness and a sense of fair play. Our discerning readers may determine whether to agree or disagree with the letter writers' opinions.

We reserve the right to edit all letters for length as well as legal concerns. With respect to errors in submitted text, we will correct spelling only. Anonymous letters and the use of pseudonyms are unacceptable.

Mail letters to: Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your full name, phone number and complete address for verification purposes.

Data inconclusive at best on genetics, homosexuality

To the editors:

Responding to the letter in the October 26 issue of the *Courier* which was titled "Science disputes ability to choose (sexual orientation)," please be advised that all *any* study to date has shown is that there *might* be a genetic link or predisposition. No one of any scientific stature or integrity is claiming to have found such a link although several have cited their particular work as "being the strongest evidence to date."

Additionally, do not attempt to make assumptions regarding something as complex as human sexuality based upon observation of animal behavior. The best evidence regarding sexual orientation points not to a biological cause, but to environmental factors.

Be aware also that many methods of reparative therapy directed at conversion of homosexuals to heterosexuality exist, and that all have had some success — conversion rates of 33 to 60 percent. Recently, Dr. Elizabeth Moberly's contribution of the concept of defensive detachment has laid the groundwork for treatment based upon a casual model. Incorporating her insights into therapy has yielded excellent results. I would like to quote one such

person:

"I have heard many theories in my search for understanding, but none have rung so true to my life experience as this one. I must say, this strikes at the very core of homosexuality. Because of this understanding of myself, I have improved in self-esteem, confidence, maturity and masculinity. It has also reaffirmed the goodness of my being. I walk as a man wounded but healing; full of hope today and for the future."

Let me end with two points. Those who ignore biblical teachings regarding homosexuality are not "walking in love." If the voice of the church has ever needed to be heard in love and conviction, it is today. Compromise of personal wants is a sign of maturity; compromise of principles is a sign of degeneration.

Setting the Record Straight, What Research Really Says About the Social Consequences of Homosexuality" is a very readable treatise dealing with homosexuality which can be obtained from Focus on the Family at 1-800-232-6459. It also gives many other resources that can be used by those working and praying with Homosexuals.

Cliff Gollus

West Lake Road, Genesee

Pastor's attempt to stir dialogue produced just 'tired, old thinking'

To the editors:

I had hoped to promote a useful dialogue about the Church's position toward homosexuals, but I see I have provoked the same tired old thinking on the subject. People still seem to think that homosexuality is a disease and different ways of looking at reality constitute dissent from the Church's teaching.

A recent article in *The New York Times Magazine* section explored the "demonizing of a senator's chief of staff." A capable, dedicated, smart woman was under attack by Washington conservatives because she did not repeat their "party line" word for word. Her basic defense was that she thinks for herself. During a recent stay in Rome, I was warned about the gypsies: thieves, robbers, people to avoid. For centuries they have been "demonized." Homosexuals too have been demonized by a culture which looks down upon them and shuns them. Is it any wonder that the senator's chief of staff is beginning to lose heart, that gypsies do what everyone expects them to do, that some homosexuals loathe themselves?

I hope it is not too late to stop the demonizing and to start treating all those who differ from us with acceptance and love. It is a good thing for a capable, smart, dedicated woman to think for herself. It is a good thing for gypsies to be gypsies. It is a good thing for homosexuals to be homosexuals. Why must we insist that everyone conform to our rigid, narrow, self-righteous, interpretation of the Church's teaching? Why must we continue to be "Pope-quoters" in order to maintain that interpretation? The teaching of the Magisterium is not meant to be a weapon, it is meant to be an invitation.

I rejoice that the Synod made "to form Catholics in beliefs, Catholic Morality, and Spirituality throughout life" its primary goal. I pray that all *Courier* correspondents take advantage of the many adult religious education opportunities that will be available throughout the diocese in the next few years. Perhaps some day it will no longer be necessary for me to write letters to the *Catholic Courier*.

Father Robert L. Collins

St. Thomas More Church, Rochester

Pray to attain Jesus' 'misguided compassion'

To the editors:

After reading Michael R. Aiello's letter about "misguided compassion" for gay people, we can only respond with a prayer.

We pray that we might have the misguided? compassion of the Catechism which says, "the number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible... They do not choose their homosexual condition... They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity."

We pray that we might have the misguided? compassion of the U.S. Bishops when they said, "Some persons find themselves ... to have a homosexual orientation. They have a right to respect, friendship and justice. They should have an active role in the Christian community" (1976 pastoral letter).

We pray that we might have the misguided? compassion of Bishop Clark

when he said, "I ache for gay and lesbian people I know who must endure the ugly things said about them by uninformed people" (*Catholic Courier*, April 8, 1993).

We pray that we might have the misguided? compassion of the Vatican Congregation of the Doctrine for the Faith when it said, "The particular inclination of a homosexual person is not a sin... The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation" (1986 letter).

Most of all, we pray that we might have the compassion of Jesus, who compared the compassion of God to that of the loving father who accepts with compassion, not judgment or condemnation, the prodigal younger brother and the righteous eldest brother, both just as they are.

Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata
Linden Street, Rochester

How would Christ treat homosexuals?

To the editors:

In response to Dr. Aiello's letter in the December 7 issue of the *Catholic Courier* ("Misguided compassion is a danger"); I would like to suggest that Dr. Aiello's view that homosexuality is a "condition" that can be "fixed" similar to alcoholism is itself misguided and dangerous. This mentality creates a religion that is pathological, not spiritual, and it is pathological religion that brings brokenness and pain closer and pushes God away.

When I first began the process of coming out as a lesbian, first to myself, then to others, to say that I hated myself was an understatement. Being raised a very strict Irish Catholic, I believed that from the very core of my being I was perverted for finding fulfillment in a person of the same gender. So much so that during my process of coming out, I abused alcohol and drugs and even had one aborted suicide attempt. Through all of this, I continued to attend church at least once a week like I had since birth. I believed that if I tried to follow Church doctrine on practicing chastity and avoiding any intimate relationships that I was following God's plan for me. But the longer I denied myself the opportunity to love and be loved the more bitter and angry I became at God and myself. I became more and more distant from my spirituality and going to church every week only exacerbated my anger. Why would a loving God want to deny one of Her/His creations the chance to grow closer to Her/Him through a loving relationship?

Since this period of several years ago, with the help of groups like Dignity ... and my wonderful partner of almost two years as well as many supportive friends and clergy members, I have come to realize that I, as a lesbian — a Catholic lesbian — am fulfilling God's plan for me. I now go to church every week with an open and joyous heart and see my relationship with my partner as a celebration of God's love.

But telling my coming out experience is not the main purpose of this letter. It is not to ask or tell anyone what to believe or what to do in regard to their position on homosexuality. Instead I would like to ask the question, what would Jesus do and say about how we currently treat homosexuals in the Catholic church and in society?

First, nowhere in the Bible do we hear Jesus ... make a single statement about homosexuality. While this doesn't necessarily mean that Jesus condoned homosexual relationships, it doesn't necessarily mean that he was opposed to them either.

Second, time after time we hear about Jesus reprimanding the religious leaders of his day for their righteousness and hypocrisy. Jesus did not accept the religious leaders' words as God's words and will, so why should we do any less?

Thirdly, one of the most striking things about Jesus was his willingness to affiliate himself with the most marginalized people of his day. Despite all of the customs of his day, Jesus fought for and interacted with the "outcasts" of his society, the sick, the poor, the widowed and the list could go on.

It seems to me that Jesus' "track record" as given to us in the Bible indicates that compassion, justice and understanding should be the order of the day, not the denying of an individual's experience of love of God and another human being. By helping someone who is homosexual to accept him or herself and the kind of relationship that is most natural and fulfilling to him or her, clergy, lay ministers, family and friends are helping that individual to move away from the bitterness and anger of denial into the love and acceptance of God.

Patricia M. Hayes
Rochester