

“Gay” Priests and Indulgence of Homosexuality

By David Carlin

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Note: We're two weeks into our end-of-year fund drive now, and doing well. And many thanks to you who have brought us this far, and rather quickly. But we have a ways to go yet and I cannot say enough how urgent it is that we meet our targets for TCT to be able to carry out its mission, and even better than in the past. The various crises and problems and opportunities of this year and still facing us in 2019. If you want to be part of the work, we need you to do your part. And there's no time like today. – Robert Royal

Knowing that the Catholic Church has had many ups and downs in the course of its long history, I am confident – well, fairly confident – that it will eventually emerge from its present slump. But this recovery won't happen anytime soon. And so I, being an old man, won't live to see it. That saddens me.

Have we hit bottom yet? If we have, I may live to see at least the beginning of the recovery. That would please me. But I fear we haven't hit bottom. There may be worse to come.

But what can possibly be worse than what has already happened? Many things, among them a refusal to deal frankly with the issue of homosexuality in the priesthood and the episcopacy. I'm not speaking only of the horrendous problem of priests who are active homosexuals; I'm speaking also of clergy who, while not themselves homosexual, have an undue sympathy for homosexuality.

I'm thinking of the fairly widespread tendency found among Church leaders to speak as though our problem is sexual “abuse,” not homosexuality. Certainly, the sexual exploitation or abuse of minors is a problem, a gigantic problem, an unspeakable horror. But clerical homosexuality is a more fundamental problem than abuse of minors. If we had no homosexual priests, we'd have very little in the way of abuse of minors.

The way some bishops talk, it's as if, when they speak of cleaning up the Church, they mean that they'll put an end to priestly sex with

minors; when priests limit themselves to consensual sex with adults, either adult men or adult women, then we'll have solved our problem. The scandal will be over.

But that's absurd. Priests and bishops have taken a solemn vow to abstain from sexual intercourse. Maybe some of them were foolish to do so. But men of honor keep their promises. And everybody knows what a priest should do if he finds it is practically impossible to live a life of priestly chastity: he should resign from the priesthood.

Many have done precisely that. Good for them. But many others, it seems, have said to themselves, "I am unable to be chaste the way a priest should be chaste, but apart from that I love being a priest." That's something like saying, "I love being a surgeon, but I hate cutting into human flesh."

If a Catholic priest finds that he no longer believes in the articles of the Nicene Creed, it goes without saying that he should resign his office; for to present yourself to the public as a Catholic priest is to say, among other things, "I am a man who believes in the Nicene Creed." Likewise, to present yourself to the public as a Catholic priest is to say, "I am a man who is living a life of priestly chastity."

Does that mean that a priest who has a lapse or two should immediately resign the priesthood? No. A man who is basically chaste may have moments of unchastity, just as a recovering alcoholic may have a slip now and then. But if it becomes something like a habit, that's another story.



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The special horror of our present problem is that so many of our unchaste priests are unchaste in a homosexual way. Among what may be called the “ordinary” sexual sins – e.g., marital contraception, masturbation, fornication, adultery, and homosexual sodomy – it is the last of these, homosexual sodomy, that has traditionally been considered the worst of the lot.

Why? Because it is “unnatural.” But if you approve of the most extreme of these sexual sins, how can you disapprove of the lesser ones? If you approve of drunkenness you can’t very well object to social drinking. Priests who have no objection to homosexual conduct will have no objection to contraception, masturbation, fornication, or adultery.

And they will probably have no more than a watered-down objection to abortion. Abortion, of course, is not a specifically sexual sin; it is a sin of homicide. But it is strongly connected with a sexual sin, fornication.

Just as President Wilson hoped to make the world safe for democracy, so abortion, along with cheap and readily available

contraception, makes the world safe for fornication. If you have no objection to fornication, you're likely not to feel a passionate objection to abortion.

That we have a priesthood and episcopacy that has no passionate objection to homosexuality – the worst of common sexual sins – goes a long way to explaining, it seems to me, why our clergy for the last fifty years or so has been “soft” on contraception, fornication, unmarried cohabitation, adultery, and even abortion.

The ideal of chastity, even hyper-chastity, has been an essential element of Catholicism from the days of the Apostles. But chastity is not a fashionable virtue in present-day America. In fact, it is the opposite of a virtue. It is a vice. Small wonder that our gay priests don't heartily endorse it. And small wonder that many of our non-gay priests, feeling sympathy with their gay brethren, don't endorse it either.

The secular world tells us that a disapproval of homosexuality arises from homophobia, an irrational hatred of gays and lesbians. Too many of us believe what they tell us. And since hatred is the worst of Christian sins, being as it is the opposite of love, the greatest of Christian virtues, we are reluctant to disapprove of homosexuality.

Catholics, and especially Catholic priests and bishops, have to overcome this reluctance. We have to deplore homosexuality. We have to shout our disapproval from the housetops. And if we do so, we may at last make some progress in getting gay priests and bishops out of positions that allow them to influence Church policy and corrupt Church teaching.

Let's not kid ourselves. If we are determined to be “tolerant,” as the secular world wishes us to be tolerant, we will be enemies of the Church and enemies of the Gospel.

***Image:** *The Kiss of Judas* by James Tissot, c, 1890 [Brooklyn Museum]. From the catalog: “Here, standing on tiptoes, Judas reaches up to kiss [Jesus], an intimate gesture that . . . underscores the bitterness of the betrayal.”

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