

November 1, 2009

Dear Parishioners,

Concerning dogma and morals, the Church has spoken for over 2,000 years and reserves the right and responsibility to continue to witness to the truth. In a debate or discussion of any issue, it is to our benefit to look at arguments from both sides. It is rare that people actively search out the voice of the Church. I intend to actively present and propose the Church's stance concerning Washington Referendum 71 on the November ballot.

### ***Washington State R71***

Let's begin with understanding what R71 is all about. Washington Referendum 71 is an effort launched by the Washington Values Alliance to overturn Senate Bill 5688 through the veto referendum process. SB 5688 grants state registered domestic partners in Washington all rights, responsibilities, and obligations granted by or imposed by state law on married couples. SB 5688 is the "everything, but marriage" bill.

A "YES" vote for R71 approves SB 5688, which grants state registered domestic partners in Washington all rights, responsibilities, and obligations granted by or imposed by state law on married couples. A "NO" vote rejects SB 5688.

### ***A Matter of Definition***

Foundational to the debate are two things: definition of marriage and definition of homosexuality. It seems clear (at this point of the debate) that marriage is between a man and a woman. For this reason, SB 5688 gives everything to homosexual couples except this definition. The future is yet to be seen. On the other hand, the definition of homosexuality retains much confusion. This is the area I would like to reflect upon.

### ***Is Homosexuality Intrinsicly Evil?***

Concerning homosexuality, the Church is often quoted for declaring that homosexuality is an intrinsic evil. Those who consider themselves as homosexuals believe and define homosexuality as something intrinsic to who they are. If I believe that I am a homosexual and the Church declares that homosexuality is intrinsicly evil, then I am intrinsicly evil. If this is the logic, how does this argument hold in the Catholic Church?

### ***Some Clarifications***

The Church never proclaimed that homosexuality is an intrinsic evil. What the Church did say is that "homosexual acts are intrinsicly disordered."<sup>1</sup> Although related, acts are distinct from the person. Moreover, the Church defines homosexual acts as an intrinsic "disorder" not evil. Why are homosexual acts disordered? Because they are contrary to natural law, close the sexual act to the gift of life, and they

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<sup>1</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana* 8.

do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity.<sup>2</sup> Although related, we need to keep this distinction: the person is good; the homosexual acts are disordered.

### ***The Church's Understanding of the Human Person***

All human persons are intrinsically good because “the dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God.”<sup>3</sup> In the book of Genesis, “God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.”<sup>4</sup>

### ***Sin and Disordered Acts***

Sin disfigures this beautiful image that God has created in us.<sup>5</sup> This disfigurement is a disorder of the will.<sup>6</sup> Homosexual acts are disordered<sup>7</sup> among a lists of disorders: lust, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution, and rape.<sup>8</sup> Any inclination to disordered action is itself a disorder. Other forms of disorder include disordered passions, ignorance, and desire for money. As one can see, homosexual acts and an inclination towards homosexual acts is just one of a host of disorders that we all struggle to overcome in our lives. Those who struggle with homosexual inclinations do not have a monopoly on objectively disordered acts! As human beings, we all share in some form of disordered desires.

### ***Distinction of Sin and Sinners***

As with all sinful disorders, we are called to reject the sin and love the sinner. How is this practically lived out? We are called to tolerate the disorder as a means to conversion. We tolerate those who struggle with pornography or masturbation so that they are able to move beyond it. We are not called to approve or uphold pornography or masturbation. We need to be reminded that approval or legalization of a disorder is something far different from the toleration of a disorder.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Solutions?***

For homosexuals and all who struggle with sexual purity, the Church encourages the practice of chastity.<sup>10</sup> Through the virtues of self-mastery, prayer and the Sacraments, she urges us to a greater inner freedom and fostering disinterested friendships.<sup>11</sup> To struggle against sinful desires is not sinning, but a testament to the power of love. People with homosexual tendencies are not sinners unless they commit the sin. It only becomes a sin when one permits the sinful tendencies and desires to form thoughts, words, and actions. To hate the sin is to truly love the sinner and all of us are called to love.



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<sup>2</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2357.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, No. 1700.

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 1:27.

<sup>5</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1701.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, No. 1755-1761.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, No. 2357.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, No. 2351-2356.

<sup>9</sup> Congregation for The Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family, *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers*.

<sup>11</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 2359.

