

Dear Cardinal Medeiros:

Thank you for your kind words in response to my recent letter to you. I shall expect a call from Father McCune in regard to the appointment which you have been kind enough to grant me. May I say that I fully concur with and share in your explanation of the objectives of my ministry to the gay community.

Here I wish only to respond to the final paragraph of your letter in which you stated "it pained me recently to learn of your criticism of the Bishops' statement on ministry to homosexuals." I presume you are referring to the article which appeared in the Boston Globe on March 10, 1974, under the caption Two Priests attack Church Rules on Homosexuals. First, I did not attack church rules on homosexuals but have no control over headlines. I did say "the guidelines will be no help to gay persons who already are in anguish over their relationship with the Church". I stand by that statement simply because in listening to the outraged reactions of all gay Catholics in the days following the announcement of those guidelines, that was their conclusion and I respect their opinion. I also said and stand by the statement that the document should have addressed the issue of the immorality of what Catholics have done and are doing to gay and bisexual persons. They need such moral leadership in the face of constant, sinful discrimination by heterosexuals. The greater sin is how homosexuals are treated, not in what they do. In no way does that statement imply that homosexual acts are not sinful. It simply discusses the undeniably greater sin of uncharity committed by Catholics against homosexuals.

Those are the only remarks of mine quoted by the article. In retrospect, perhaps I should have gone on to give the reporter the following critique which I offer to you now for your perusal. First of all, it is not a statement of the Bishops as your letter to me states, but simply "a valuable digest of traditional and contemporary theological thought" approved by the Bishops' Committee on Pastoral Research. In fact it isn't even that since it fails to include in its digestion most of the contemporary theological thought which is in disagreement with it. It is to my mind the digest of Father John Harvey's thought ignoring other opinions, research and evidence not only of theologians but also of Scripture scholars and social scientists. The Bishops to my mind have been badly used and have lent their name to a paper with pretensions of scholarship.

Fr. John Harvey who is its major contributor asserts that there is a problem especially among some younger priests of "poor theology" of uncertainty over whether homosexuality is wrong. I am not a younger priest nor am I uncertain. He is wrong. Homosexuality is not wrong. He himself says "it can be safely said that man or woman does not will to become homosexual"; but sin is in the will and only in the will. Hence I conclude with certitude, it is not sinful to be homosexual or for that matter heterosexual.

Rather than quarrel with the theology of the statement which better men than I have already done, let me deal with the psychological, sociological and scientific inaccuracies contained therein. Evidently Fr. Harvey neglected to inform the Bishops' Committee that the American Psychiatric Ass'n., the American Psychological Assn., the American Assn. Social Workers, and the American Historical Society, as well as the National Institute of Mental Health, the American Legal Assn., etc. etc. to list but a few, have repudiated the contention rife throughout this

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statement that homosexuality is an illness. It seems hardly proper for Bishops to be the arbiters of what constitutes mental illness. I doubt that the Bishops meant to engage in public confrontation with the prestigious American Psychiatric Assn. and to tell psychiatry that the theologians know better than they what constitutes illness. Rather I suspect Father Harvey never told the Bishops of this development.

It is only reasonable to expect of such a program as the Bishops outline a reasonable percentage of success. Since this program is essentially the same program that has been in effect for as long as I can recall, is it presumptuous to ask: "show us your cures, your celibate homosexuals. If they be so many, why not ask these cured celibate sinless priests, sisters, brothers and laypeople to assume leadership roles in gay liberation and Dignity to give example as to how it is done, testimony to the reasonable success of the program (every drug addiction program has ex-addicts; ex-alcoholics lead the AA program). Let the celibate homosexual afford assurance to those who want to believe this program is possible, to bring back to the Church the major portion of gays whom my experience suggests have left in despair of ever succeeding with such a program. I don't believe it has worked. I don't believe it will work. I hold myself ready to be shown otherwise. Will the healthy, happy, chaste celibate cured Catholic gays step forward? Meanwhile by the Catholic principal of the lesser of two evils, one can endorse and encourage organizations like Dignity.

For the Bishops Committee to approve of such a document is astonishing. It is akin to being concerned about the immoral acts of theft among prisoners at Dachau while silent about the enormously greater moral question: why are 6 million Jews in the Camps anyway? It is akin to being concerned about the morality of Vietnamese women practicing prostitution while silent about the greater immorality of the American involvement in the war.

Certainly there is a question about the sexual acts of homosexuals. Debate is raging among theologians but by far the greater sin, the sin against the Queen of Virtues - charity, should be the preoccupation of the Bishops as it was of Jesus. Purity, it will surprise many of my Catholic compatriots is not synonymous with morality. It was relatively low on Jesus' hierarchy of virtues. "That man commits immoral acts!" means to most Catholics "he is impure". It would never occur to most Catholics that you meant, he is a racist, a perjurer, a grafter or a faggot-hating homophobe. Had the Bishops ever shown any compassion or concern for homosexual victims of the "killa queer for Christ" mentality rampant among the Catholic people, gays might find more reason to listen more readily. Concern for lesser virtues in the wake of silence about the violation of the greater virtues reminds one of the sudden concern of the "right to life" Catholics who have been silent about the life of Vietnamese, poor, blacks, chicanos and other disenfranchised people including gay people.

Since we eventually did hear from the Bishops on the war, six years too late, can we now expect a paper dealing with homophobia: the fear and hatred of homosexuals which is anything but Christian?

Let me continue with some other observations. On Page 4 the author says "sexual intercourse has a twofold meaning. It is an act of union with the beloved and it is procreative. Neither meaning may be excluded." One wonders why the Committee chose to issue this paper about the immoral, unnatural acts of gay Catholics at the very time in the life of the Church in America when most Catholic women of child-bearing age

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are practicing the far more unnatural act of birth control and 52% are continuing to receive Communion without benefit of Confession. If homosexual acts preclude the possibility of procreation, so do the sexual acts of most Catholic couples, so also do the acts of sterile couples of whose intercourse the Church approves. Why single out gays?

"It is assumed moreover that the only ordinate use of the sexual faculties must be oriented towards a person of the opposite sex." But this is the very question which theologians are discussing. Is the assumption correct? Could it be that "the purpose of the sexual faculties namely procreation" is for heterosexuals yet not for homosexuals for whom there might be another purpose?

"The procreation and education of children is at least as important a goal in marriage as the expression of mutual love, but homosexual acts make the attainment of this goal impossible." Or is it the unwilling homosexual condition that does it? As a matter of fact married men in surprising numbers do have homosexual acts while continuing to procreate and educate children, so it is untrue that homosexual acts make the attainment of this goal impossible.

In passing let me advert to the contention of many traditional theologians that anything done for or in behalf of homosexuals will inevitably lead to the weakening of heterosexual marriage. My experience is to the contrary. As long as homosexuals are discriminated against, deprived and driven into ghettos, there will be a compulsion upon homosexuals to enter into heterosexual marriages with the consequent injustice to their spouses and their children.

"Not surprisingly lasting and fulfilling homosexual relationships are not found very often." With men like Fr. Harvey around one wonders how any could last. As a matter of fact, however, the statement is unfounded. We have a plethora of lasting homosexual relationships. Since Newsweek estimates that 3 out of 4 straight marriages made on the East Coast will end in divorce, will Fr. Harvey admit, not surprisingly fulfilling heterosexual relationships are not found very often?

To pass quickly over the Scriptural quotations, let me simply say that Fr. Harvey neglected to tell the Bishops Committee that every one of these quotations is disputed by reputable Catholic theologians and Scripture scholars. Fr. Harvey says it is clear what the Scriptures meant; it is not quite that clear to me as I read the reflections of reputable Catholic Scripture scholars.

"There is hardly a more difficult problem unless it is the conversion of developed homosexual tendencies into normal channels." Indeed Fr. Harvey could tell you that it is not impossible and certainly undesirable psychologically.

The author then launches into a lengthy explanation of the etiology of homosexuality. "Homosexual boys have possessive mothers." Well so do heterosexual boys who are their brothers; so do most American boys if you were to judge by the TV families we watch on the tube. This outrageous indictment of 40 million parents of 20 million homosexuals is stunning. For the Bishops to endorse by allowing the repetition of such an unproven and disputed hypothesis is a grave violation of charity with which they might far more profitably concern themselves. Even if it were established that there is some connection, what is to say this is causal? Could it be an effect? For example, the Father sensing the boy is homosexual becomes distant and the Mother sensing the plight of the boy becomes

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more protective. In this case the boy's homosexuality caused the distance and the smothering. It wasn't the distance of the father and the smothering of the mother that caused the homosexuality.

On Page 6 the author sees as one possible cause of homosexuality undue sheltering by the boy's mother. When the youngster yearns to play with his peers but is not allowed to do so. Yet on Page 10 the author encourages the very same sheltering by telling homosexuals they must avoid private swimming pools, summer camp cabins, dressing rooms for athletes, etc. If it were true (and it isn't) that secluding a boy from play experiences with his peers causes homosexuality, one can only conclude that the author rather than the mothers is guilty of causing homosexuality.

And what are we to think of Page 7's assertion that another factor in the development of the homosexual person is "a bad case of acne". Does Fr. Harvey also believe that masturbation causes insanity? I am reminded of the anecdote "what happens to Catholics who practice birth control? Answer: They fall off the edge of the earth."

On Page 7, the author intimates that homosexuality can be caused by seduction, a denial of his previous assertion that in every case "the homosexual discovers an already existent condition", and is not seduced into it. Which of these contradictory opinions would the Bishops have us accept?

On Page 8 "the compulsive nature of many homosexual acts may be surmised from the squalid circumstances coupled with risk in which many meetings take place. Reciprocal masturbation in a public washroom is hardly the sort of thing which would appeal to a normally free agent." In the first place most gays are not found in public washrooms as Father Harvey very well knows. In the second place, if heterosexual acts were outlawed tomorrow, one would find heterosexuals in squalid places acting compulsively.

The author says "the Confessor should encourage the young person who confesses homosexual acts to "seek professional help". Since one in three American males has had some homosexual activity since puberty, one in five has had extensive and one in twenty is predominantly homosexual, the author is suggesting that approximately 50% of American males be sent to psychiatrists. What the psychiatrist will do with 50 million new patients afflicted with a condition which the psychiatric profession no longer consider as illness, the author does not explain.

Homosexuals "must avoid homosexual groups with their affectation of dress and speech". As one who is daily in the presence of homosexual groups, I must express astonishment with Fr. Harvey's naivete. I can only assume that he is referring to transvestites. Since most transvestites are heterosexual, not homosexual, and since only one in a hundred homosexuals are transvestites, the statement is curiously distressing.

"While prisoners frequently submit to homosexual acts under terror, they are not entirely inculpable." The author of this statement, be he Priest, Bishops' Committee, or whatever exhibits insufferable insensitivity. Let me paraphrase the statement: "while women frequently submit to heterosexual acts under terror, they are not entirely inculpable." I deal frequently with gay prisoners who have been raped by gangs of heterosexual men in prison and I am ashamed to see such a statement in print. If this makes me disloyal or disobedient, perhaps it could be excused by my emotional proximity to raped 14 year olds.

"The Priest should do more than outline the arguments which we have indicated above; he should show the person that he can live chastely in the world by means of a plan of life, which will include personal meditative prayer, spiritual reading, reception of the Sacraments, and some specific work of charity in the world. Two other elements which should be stressed are regular access to spiritual direction and the formation of a stable friendship with at least one person. One of the greatest difficulties for the homosexual is the formation of such a friendship." The author's program sounds reminiscent of the program outlined for Seminarians and Priests. However, if celibacy is a gift, a Grace, a charism which is not given to all people and must be freely chosen by the candidate for the priesthood, it seems odd that we can presuppose it and impose it upon twenty million American homosexuals. The last sentence in the above paragraph concerning difficulties of forming friendships is undeserving of comment so contrary is it to experience.

"He needs motivation to move out of a situation in which he has had a measure of human affection and support from others in the same condition as himself." Speaking psychologically not theologically, I construe this as a condemnation to immaturity rather than the more abundant life to which Christ calls us. Such a proposal would end every AA program ever devised; every half-way house; every minority group effort against discrimination.

"Indeed the deeper need of any human is for friendship rather than for genital expression although this is usually an element in heterosexual relationships." Really? A mother-son relationship is a heterosexual relationship which is presumably seldom genital. Perhaps this seems like knit-picking but one can expect precision in a statement affecting the lives of so many people. My experience is that most friendships between men and women do not involve genital expression whether at work or at home between brothers and sisters, in social activities between couples, etc.

"Many homosexuals have a hang-up about psychiatry." Indeed. Rather they have an aversion to psychiatry since psychiatry has had a dismal history of oppression of the homosexual. The recent admission of the American Psychiatric Assn. that it was wrong to classify homosexuality as an illness was accompanied by no apology whatsoever.

"If there is a real homosexual orientation, the individual should be advised to seek psychiatric help because generally speaking the person has other problems besides the homosexual condition." Father Harvey is evidently unfamiliar with recent studies establishing the fact that homosexuals are just as emotionally mature and healthy as are heterosexuals.

"Homosexual fantasy leading to masturbation is symptomatic of deep-seated problems." What Fr. Harvey gratuitously asserts, I gratuitously deny.

Fr. Harvey then puts in a plug for his newly formed institute whose objective will be the rehabilitation of Priests and Religious homosexuals; while I suppose this commercial was to be expected one wonders if Fr. Harvey is also planning an institute to which we can remand heterosexual priests steeped in concubinage. It will of course have to be much larger. Finally let me quote from the Salvatorian Justice and Peace Commission, Gay Ministry Task Force, a response to the publication from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee. "The statement is at best inaccurate and insensitive. At its worst it is a misrepresentation of data and a cavalier disrespect for human lives and

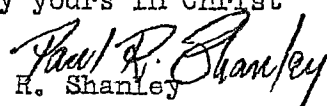
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dignity. Such generalizations, always negatively anti-gay based primarily and almost exclusively on the admittedly limited research of Dr. Irving Bieber are presumed to be found as a thread of continuity in most instances of exclusive or overwhelming homosexual development." "The NCCB statement presents this as a general overview of contemporary scientific research, but fails to note the work of Kinsey, Pomeroy, Hooker, Churchill, Hoffman, Weiberg, Szasz, etc. (all of whom oppose the views of Bieber); nor does it refer to the recent decision of the American Psychiatric Assn. or to the previous decisions of the American Psychological Assn. or the National Institute of Mental Health. It would seem that psychiatry is normative for church teaching only when it agrees with theological a prioris."

Your Eminence, I am sure you will disagree with many of my objections to the document. I am in hopes, however, that you will find some of them significant and will also recognize that I did not give them to the Press. Had I done so I would have been accused of airing the dirty linen in the wrong places. Having not done so, I now recognize that it has led you into thinking that my remarks were not based on any extensive study. After reading the more intensive criticisms, I have enclosed in this letter, can you now better understand why I said in The Globe that the guidelines will be no help to gay persons who already are in anguish over their relationship with the Church. Can you understand also why I said "the issue of immorality is what Catholics have done and are doing to gay and bisexual persons. They need such moral leadership in the face of constant, sinful discrimination by heterosexuals. The greater sin is how homosexuals are treated, not in what they do." I think this statement by the Bishops, if it was the Bishops; by the Bishops Committee, if it was the Bishops Committee; by Father Harvey, if it was Father Harvey, is but another example of the very attitude which I in the Globe article was quoted as decrying.

I must insist that this is not what it purports to be: "a valuable digest of traditional and contemporary theological thought." It is homophobic, hysterical, myth-perpetuating, unscientific, ignorant and offensive.

Respectfully yours in Christ


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