

Christian Support Divided Over Anti-Gay Pride Parade

✖ A city councilman in Brazil is paving the way for heterosexuals to stand against excessive gay rights with the nation's first Heterosexual Pride Day. But some Christian ministries that work with gays think this so-called Straight Pride Day sends a divisive message.

Carlos Apolinário's legislation proposes to celebrate heterosexual pride on the third Sunday of December. Although the mayor could rain on the parade by not signing the bill, Heterosexual Pride Day is set to take place in Brazil's largest city—São Paulo—where gay pride marches frequently take over the city streets.

"I respect gays and I am against any kind of aggression made against them," Apolinário said. "The creation of Heterosexual Day does not symbolize a struggle against gays but against what I believe are excesses and privileges."

Perhaps ironically, gays and Christians alike agree that Straight Pride Day is a bad idea. With the percentage of gays killed in Brazil rising 113 percent in the last few years, the Brazilian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Association is concerned that Apolinário's Heterosexual Pride Day could incite homophobic violence.

Jeff Buchanan, executive vice president of Exodus International, an interdenominational Christian ministry that assists those who struggle with same-sex attraction, is more concerned about social persecution than acts of violence.

"This is going to contribute to a social criminalization on this issue within Brazil. It's going to separate those who may not necessarily be active, militant, gay community members, but may be struggling," Buchanan argues. "Apolinário is going

to basically categorize everyone into the same category. My concern is that gays are going to be ostracized and then, as a result, they will be persecuted socially.”

Buchanan also fears a greater danger: hindrances to reaching out to lost souls. Heterosexual Pride Day could breed further division between the church and the gay community in Brazil.

“We’re not going to win souls with a tit-for-tat strategy,” Buchanan says. “The church is going to make a difference when we authentically love and minister to the gay community.”

As he sees it, a parade of heterosexuals would still be a parade of sinners. Instead of homosexuality, the proud-to-be-straight participants may be engaging in other sins such as adultery, pornography or divorce without biblical justification. His point: There is no need for feelings of superiority based on a sexual orientation. The issue is not heterosexuality, he says, but holiness.

Buchanan says there are churches in Brazil approaching homosexuality in a biblical way. To him, that means working to attract the gay community to their congregations with the love of Christ. Buchanan says the same is needed in churches across America.

“We have to continue to bridge the gap, to reach those in the gay community with the love and the gospel of Christ without compromising truth,” Buchanan says. “It’s like with any other area of evangelism—you start with your personal or your inner circle, your personal sphere. You reach those that are in your life—men and women that have been affected by this issue.

“Whether they struggle themselves or their friend or family member, you minister to them. You love and display grace and truth to them on a personal basis. That’s where it begins.”