

'Thou Shalt Not Be Catholic'

It was prescience, not paranoia, that prompted some social commentators to predict that gay activism would become the principle threat to **religious freedoms** in America. A recent incident at George Washington University provides the latest confirmation.

In 2010, the University of Illinois fired a Catholic professor who taught courses on Catholicism in the school's religion department after a student accused him of hate speech because the professor affirmed what the **Catholic Church** taught about homosexual practice. After a national outcry and a swift legal response, the professor was reinstated. But the fact that he was initially fired is an absolute outrage.

Now, two gay seniors at George Washington University are seeking to have the Catholic chaplain at the university's Newman Center removed over his alleged anti-gay stance. (The Newman Center is named after Cardinal Newman and is there to serve the school's Catholic students, who make up roughly 3,000 of the university's 10,000 students.)

The two students, Damian Legacy and Blake Bergen, have mounted a campaign to get Father Greg Shaffer dismissed, accusing him of being ardently anti-gay and (perish the thought!) anti-abortion as well.

What? A Catholic priest who opposes homosexual practice and abortion? How can this be? What has become of the Catholic Church? (Dripping sarcasm intended.)

According to published reports, "Legacy and Bergen say they are primarily upset about the counseling Shaffer offers. They say he urges students who have homosexual feelings to lead a life of celibacy."

What else would Shaffer be expected to do when a gay Catholic

comes to him for counseling? Encourage promiscuity? Encourage serial, gay monogamy? Encourage **redefining marriage** so the gay Catholic could “wed” a same-sex partner? And since the priest has committed himself to celibacy—and is, hopefully, being faithful to his commitment—is it so outlandish for him to counsel others to be celibate as well? (As a married man, I’m not claiming that I could easily be celibate. I’m simply discussing the situation at hand.)

We are told that Damian Legacy “spent considerable time at the Newman Center during his first two years at George Washington. He was an altar server at mass. He believed that he would become a Catholic priest after graduating.

“All that changed, though, when Legacy told Shaffer that he and Bergen had entered a homosexual relationship. Shaffer allegedly charged Legacy with being immoral and lacking in faith.”

So, the young Mr. Legacy believed that he could be a good, faithful Catholic while being involved in an active homosexual relationship? And he was offended that the priest allegedly told him he was being immoral? Seriously?

Well, here’s a news flash for Damian Legacy: According to the Bible and Catholic teaching, sex outside of marriage (which is only the union of a man and woman) is immoral, be it heterosexual sex or homosexual sex. That’s exactly what a faithful Catholic priest (or Protestant pastor) would tell you. And so, rather than trying to get him fired for telling you the truth, you should be thanking him for caring enough to warn you.

According to Legacy, “To have my faith leader view me that way, just because of one piece of the way that God made me, and to think that one part is responsible for the destruction of my human dignity, it just didn’t ... I can’t even begin to describe the mental conflict that it creates.”

Perhaps the priest was trying to help this young man see that he was more than a sexual being and that there was a way to exercise self-control and find a deeper place of satisfaction within his own religious faith? Or is Legacy telling us that God made him in such a way that he was not able to refrain from sex with another man, even while in college? Perhaps the "mental conflict" of which he speaks is caused in part by his actions?

The two students are also upset with a statement Father Shaffer made after President Obama announced his support for same-sex "marriage" last May, when Shaffer wrote, "As Vatican II states, God is the author of marriage. He has defined marriage as between a man and a woman. Every single rational person knows that sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are unnatural and immoral. They know it in their hearts."

Shaffer may have stated his opinion strongly, but this is hardly over-the-top for a Catholic priest, and overall, he is simply affirming the teaching of Vatican II.

Legacy and Bergen are also distributing "a letter to high-ranking administrators," citing "academic studies connecting homophobic behavior to loss of appetite, insomnia and other detrimental psychological consequences." (I imagine they will not be citing academic studies connecting homosexual practice with greatly increased risks of contracting deadly STDs, among other health issues.)

The bottom line is that two students are telling the Catholic chaplain of a university's Catholic center, "Thou shalt not be Catholic." George Washington University, what will you do? Will you stand with the right of a Catholic chaplain to be Catholic (and I write this as a non-Catholic myself), or will you stand with anti-religious bullying?

The good news is that Catholic students are rallying around

the chaplain. Perhaps their courage will prove contagious.

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