

## **Boy Scouts of America**

Perhaps you have heard that there has been debate among Boy Scout leadership recently about their national policy on those who openly profess themselves as homosexual. Currently, individuals who openly and actively practice the homosexual lifestyle are not permitted to be either a scout or a leader in the BSA. Lobby and activist groups that misguidedly support the homosexual lifestyle as moral have had great success in convincing a lot of the BSA's corporate supporters to stop funding the Scouts because of their commitment to traditional values. Recently, the Scouts took a poll in an attempt to decide whether to maintain their policy, or to allow local councils to determine their own policy when it comes to this matter. In the end, they decided to postpone any decision, but obviously one will be made in the near future.

What can you do? First, pray that the Scout leadership will hold firm in upholding the Law of God. Pray also for those who have been given false information, or browbeaten, or fooled into believing that a homosexual lifestyle is moral. Second, if you are involved with Scouts or know anyone who is, please make sure that everyone in the Scouts is aware of what is going on and encourage them to educate themselves on the Church's moral teaching regarding homosexuality and the homosexual lifestyle (which are distinct things, by the way). Third, don't be afraid to express your opinion (informed by Catholic doctrine, of course) in public and stand up for Jesus Christ and the way of life that He calls for. Our modern society needs to hear from us Catholics more! We must have the same determination and enthusiasm as our misguided opponents in the political action groups.

### **Follow-Up on the Boy Scouts**

If you read my article on the Boy Scouts last week, or if you're generally up on the news, then you know about how the Boy Scouts of America are trying to decide what is the right thing to do when it comes to policies on those with homosexual tendencies. What I found out after last week's bulletin was already off to the printers is that part of that decision has already been made. The BSA has changed their national policy for boys so as to allow boys who consider themselves homosexual to join.

Now, I actually think that this is a good decision, and I hope that no one is surprised by that opinion. Because, of course, *being* a person with homosexual tendencies is not a sin. Catholics should never think of these people as 'bad;' they are our brothers and sisters. Naturally, *living out* a homosexual lifestyle is sinful. But, living out *any* sort of sexual lifestyle is, first of all, probably not an issue for boy scouts, most of whom are young and still interested in the more innocent things in life. And second, any sort of sexual activity within boy scouting events is already prohibited by BSA policy, whether heterosexual or not. If we really mean what we say when we profess that there is nothing inherently immoral with having homosexual tendencies, then there is no reason to ban *boys* from scouting just because biology or raising has developed homosexual tendencies in them.

Of course, I do think there is a bad side to all of this. That is, beyond helping to normalize our attitude towards homosexuality and also the increased concern and supervision that leaders will have to exercise over the older boy scouts, who may be interested in activity of a

sexual nature. And that downside is: I think this decision will probably make it a lot harder in the future for the BSA to say “No” to openly homosexual leaders. What happens when a young man goes all the way up the ranks, achieves Eagle Scout, and now wants to become a Boy Scout leader, but has always said he is homosexual? He has been accepted within Boys Scouts as a boy, but he can no longer participate as a man. Don’t misunderstand me; I think that this situation, unfortunate as it is, may be the best solution. But it is uncertain—and is a very delicate balancing act that I fear the BSA will not be able to maintain under pressure from homosexual activist groups. We for our part must provide the corresponding pressure from the other side if we expect the BSA to continue to uphold the traditional values that recognize the immorality of a homosexual lifestyle and that protect our boys from homosexual activists who want to become Boy Scout leaders. That is my opinion.

### **Supreme Court Cases on DOMA and Proposition 8**

You are hopefully aware that the Supreme Court is currently deciding cases on the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act and of California’s Proposition 8, banning homosexual ‘marriage,’ so called. What are these things? DOMA is a federal law that defines marriage as between one man and one woman. It was passed by the Legislative Branch of our government, in other words, put in place by our representatives because they knew it to be the will of the people of the United States of America. However, the Executive Branch of our government—President Obama—has decided that his personal opinion is more important than the will of the people, expressed through their elected representatives, and has refused to enforce or defend this law. As for Proposition 8, it was enacted into law by popular vote in California, 2008. Other Californians then filed a court case claiming the law to be unjust discrimination, and a federal judge ruled the law unconstitutional. The case was then appealed to the Supreme Court.

As Catholics, we should all be very worried about what is going to happen in these cases. If the Supreme Court Justices make the wrong decision, this will become *Roe vs. Wade* all over again. I do not know why homosexuality is the big issue of today, but it obviously is. You can’t turn on the TV without seeing some propaganda about the goodness of homosexuality. As Catholics, we must inform ourselves about the Church’s teaching on homosexuality and the homosexual lifestyle. Then, we must engage the culture in an intelligent and civil (in all senses of the word) debate. If we fail to present the truth to our society, God will hold us responsible for the outcome; plus the U.S. we take another step down the road to moral disintegration and, eventually, the destruction of our country. This means you: talking to friends, neighbors, family members, etc. In the future I will try to do more to educate the parish on the Church’s teaching in this area, but I want to say it carefully, correctly, and sensitively, so it will take time before I’m ready to start that topic in depth.

I do, however, want to say something else about these two cases, not as priest and teacher of Catholic doctrine, but as an American. It seems to me that there is something very wrong with our governmental system. How can the Executive Branch refuse to enforce the laws of the Legislative Branch, as with DOMA? Even more troubling, how has the Judicial Branch, the

Supreme Court, developed the power to make laws? Take Roe vs. Wade: the Supreme Court didn't just say, "This law is unconstitutional, so you will need to make a new one." No, it said, all laws banning abortion in the U.S. (and there were a bunch) are unconstitutional; don't bother making any new ones because that's the new law. (That is my summary, of course, but it's effectively what was said.) From where does the Supreme Court derive this power? It certainly isn't in the Constitution. How can one federal judge in California countermand the popular vote of the people of California, as with Proposition 8? There is something seriously wrong with our government when our laws are being written by our Judicial System instead of our Legislators. So, perhaps next time you have conversation with someone, it can be impolite on both counts—religion and politics!

**THE DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE AND THE RIGHT OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM:  
REAFFIRMING A SHARED WITNESS**

An Open Letter from Religious Leaders to All in Positions of Public Service

Released April 23, 2015

[This open letter, which can be accessed on the USCCB's website <<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/promotion-and-defense-of-marriage/index.cfm>>, was signed by 35 religious leaders from a variety of faiths, including the Most Rev. Joseph Kurtz, Archbishop of Louisville and President of the USCCB.]

Dear Friends:

At this significant time in our nation's history with the institution of marriage before the United States Supreme Court, we reaffirm our commitment to promote and defend marriage—the union of one man and one woman. As religious leaders from various faith communities, we acknowledge that marriage is the foundation of the family where children are raised by a mother and a father together. Our commitment to marriage has been expressed on previous occasions, including the Letter of Shared Commitment and Letter on Marriage and Religious Liberty. This commitment is inseparable from affirming the equal dignity of all people and the necessity of protecting their basic rights.

The state has a compelling interest in maintaining marriage as it has been understood across faiths and cultures for millennia because it has a compelling interest in the well-being of children. Every child has a mother and a father, and every child deserves the opportunity, whenever possible, to be raised by his or her own married mother and father in a stable, loving home. Marriage as the union of a man and a woman is the only institution that encourages and safeguards the connection between children and their mother and father. Although this connection cannot always be realized and sustained—and many single parents, for example, are heroic in their efforts to raise their children—it is in the best interests of the state to encourage and uphold the family founded on marriage and to afford the union of husband and wife unique

legal protection and reinforcement.

The redefinition of legal marriage to include any other type of relationship has serious consequences, especially for religious freedom. It changes every law involving marital status, requiring that other such relationships be treated as if they were the same as the marital relationship of a man and a woman. No person or community, including religious organizations and individuals of faith, should be forced to accept this redefinition. For many people, accepting a redefinition of marriage would be to act against their conscience and to deny their religious beliefs and moral convictions. Government should protect the rights of those with differing views of marriage to express their beliefs and convictions without fear of intimidation, marginalization or unwarranted charges that their values imply hostility, animosity, or hatred of others.

In this and in all that we do, we are motivated by our duty to love God and neighbor. This love extends to all those who disagree with us on this issue. The well-being of men, women, and the children they conceive compels us to stand for marriage as the union of one man and one woman. We call for the preservation of the unique meaning of marriage in the law, and for renewed respect for religious freedom and for the conscience rights of all in accord with the common good.

### **What Does the Supreme Court Decision on Same-Sex ‘Marriage’ Mean for the Church?**

As you are probably aware, on June 26<sup>th</sup> in the decision *Obergefell vs. Hodges*, the Supreme Court of the United States of America ruled that same-sex ‘marriage’ is now legal in our country. This is a very confusing time for our country and a confusing time for us as Catholics. And yet, nothing has really changed from the Church’s perspective. I wish to take a few moments to express my support for all faithful Catholics who deal with homosexuality, both here at IHM and at large. I also wish to tell you—as best as I am able—what you can and cannot expect from the Catholic Church as the American bishops and priests try to react appropriately to this decision and lead the People of God in our common response. Here is what I feel that I, as a priest, can promise you:

1. The Church **does not** hate anyone. Nor does she unjustly discriminate against anyone. St. John writes in his first epistle, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life remaining in him” (3:15). The Lord Jesus Himself says, “Love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44) and “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt. 25:40). We must always work to purify ourselves and our Church of any hatred or unjust discrimination. We must work to show love, respect, and support to our brothers and sisters who struggle with homosexuality.
2. The Church **does not** consider people with homosexual tendencies (in politically correct language, people who are gay or lesbian) to be sinful. We cannot always control our feelings and passions, although we can always control what we do with them. Same-sex attraction is

not a sin. Catholics with homosexual tendencies who are living according to the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church are welcome among us as first-class citizens (as they say) and can receive the Sacraments like anyone else.

- At the same time, it is important to say that—unlike popular culture today—the Church **does** consider same-sex attraction to be disordered. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, *which is objectively disordered*, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God’s will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord’s Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition” (par. 2358, my emphasis). That whole quotation from the *Catechism* is important, but the point I wanted to make is about the sexual inclination being disordered. Again, this doesn’t mean sinful—a person must choose to act on the inclination for it to become sinful. But just as it is a bodily disorder that some of us are nearsighted or farsighted, or that some of us are born with a cleft palate or Down syndrome, it is a disorder to be sexually attracted to someone of the same sex.

3. The Church **does** consider sexual relations between same-sex couples to be a serious sin. This should not be surprising. When heterosexual couples have relations before marriage (what we call “fornication”), it is a serious sin. When two people commit adultery because one or both of them are married, it is a serious sin. Every use of our sacred sexuality outside of the context of a man and woman who are married (see Matt. 19:3-9) is, as the Church teaches, a serious sin. Even within marriage, things such as spousal rape or viewing your spouse as an object of lust are serious sins. It is no different with homosexual relations. As with each of these examples, Catholics with homosexual tendencies who commit the sin of homosexual relations must repent, go to Confession, and resolve to sin no more before they can receive Holy Communion. And by the way, even if people choose to remain in sin, we don’t hate them because they’re sinners. Love the sinner; hate the sin—difficult, but that’s what Jesus teaches.
4. Catholic churches **will not** be celebrating weddings for same-sex couples. A ‘marriage’ between a same-sex couple may be recognized now by civil government, but it is not and will never be recognized by the Catholic Church. Using both faith and reason, we understand the act of sexual intercourse to be sacred and a reflection of God’s love, even between two non-Christians. Of course, for Christians, marriage is something even deeper: a Sacrament that makes present the love between Jesus Christ and His Church (see Eph. 5). This expression of love cannot be reproduced between two people of the same sex, as even the physical structures of our bodies make clear. We are grateful that, at this point, the Supreme Court still recognizes that the religious liberty we have in our country allows the Church exemption from these new laws. The Church cannot be legally compelled to witness same-sex weddings.
5. The Church **will** continue to oppose and peacefully agitate against laws or court decisions that incorporate the idea of same-sex ‘marriage’ into the U.S. legal code. The Catholic Church has nothing against the love, friendship, and affection that may exist between two

people of the same sex. (As mention above, however, she does condemn actual sexual relations between them.) Nor is the Church particularly concerned with whether two people can attain the same legal benefits that have traditionally been given to married couples (tax breaks, inheritance, power to make medical decisions for the other, etc.). That's a decision for civil government to make. Nevertheless, we cannot agree with a law or court decision that gives legitimacy to an immoral union between a same-sex couple and tries to call it "marriage." These laws are unjust laws, which means that they are not really laws at all. As Catholics, we will not obey them when they infringe on our God-given, civilly-recognized religious liberty, and we will continue to fight until they are repealed.

I pray that this simple review of what Catholics believe and why will be helpful in this confusing and challenging time. As pastor of IHM, allow me to extend a personal and communal welcome to anyone struggling with homosexuality. We want to make a place for you here in our parish. We are not perfect, and we have a long way to go in learning how to minister to our brothers and sister who deal with homosexuality. I hope that you can give us that chance. I am sure that we have much that we can teach each other and learn from each other. I pray that all IHM parishioners can strive to embody the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church when it comes to this timely and delicate issue. Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us!