

## 3 Times a Slave

St. Peter Claver, Jesuit missionary to Africans enslaved to landowners in 17th century Colombia, would descend into the holds of slave ships and welcome those barely alive with a crucifix in one hand and medicine and food in the other. 'This Jesus will love you better than any person ever could...' He loved 300,000 slaves into the new life only Christ Jesus gives.

We need the Spirit of St. Peter Claver as we seek to love a generation enslaved by early sexualization of non-sexual needs combined with false, deflating answers to pressing questions about love, intimacy and gender identity. 'Harassed and helpless' is a generation without boundary who needs transforming love that lasts.

First enslavement: the vulnerability of young persons to sexual abuse. In a groundbreaking review of most contemporary research in the area of sexuality and gender ('Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological and Social Sciences', The New Atlantis Journal, Fall 2016), Drs. Lawrence Mayer and Paul McHugh cite persistently high rates of childhood sexual abuse among persons who later identify as gay or lesbian adults (3X more for all in contrast to 'heterosexual' counterparts; 5X more for 'gay' adult males who were abused homosexually as children.) One impact of abuse: normal needs for connection and attention become sexualized, which encourages 'gay' identification later on.

Second enslavement: systems in western culture designed to advocate for 'at risk' youth, including middle and high school educators, therapists, and social workers lunge at the opportunity to confirm pre-teens and teens as 'queer' as soon as they express any kind of same-sex attraction. Driven by the contestable belief that one is born intrinsically 'gay', these child 'advocates' actually contribute to teen abuse by urging the vulnerable to assume a 'gay' self and peer group. How many underage kids have been tacitly encouraged to begin having 'gay' sex in junior high school by clueless caregivers? In this way, our systems contribute to the enslavement of kids. (Mayer and McHugh cite substantial evidence that points to the fluidity of sexual desire in both male and female teens; SSA is not set in stone, and can readily change.)

Most concerning to me is the Church which contributes to the enslavement of young adults by insisting that Jesus does nothing to help them overcome same-sex attraction. An example: a young friend of mine repented of gay activity in high school then began getting the help he needed to move onto normal connection with women, the prospect of family, etc. He recently attended a summer Christian course for students preparing for university. There he heard Christopher Yuan, a popular speaker on Christian faith and homosexuality, who according to my friend testified weakly to Jesus' apparent unwillingness to transform persons with same-sex attraction.

No better, and possibly worse is Anglican Wesley Hill who advocates for committed 'gay' celibate unions. In response to the newly consecrated Bishop Chamberlain in England who champions his gay self and lifetime partner, Hill writes what he hopes to hear from the new bishop: 'I am in a

committed faithful relationship with another man. I love him deeply and hope to spend the rest of my life with him. We don't sleep together...in the hope that we'll be able to love each other more deeply, more truly and more in line with how God in Christ has made us and redeemed us to be.'

Bleech! Aren't we as the Church called to proclaim and facilitate the transforming power of love for persons enslaved in sin? I urged my young friend to refuse all such false witnesses and to run his race. Slightly stumbled, he regained footing as he recalled how much ground Jesus has already taken in reconciling him to who he is—a son of the Father, the man of God's design. St. Peter Claver, lead on!