

## Behold the Sham

‘You are the truth presiding over all things. But in my greed, I was unwilling to lose You, and wanted to have You at the same time as holding onto a lie...That is why I lost You: You do not condescend to be possessed together with falsehood.’ St. Augustine

We gathered in Palm Springs last weekend to celebrate the Lamb—He who became living water for us in the desert of sexual brokenness. Years prior, many of us had frequented this storied playground in pursuit of ‘gay’ everything; we fled to the desert from our Los Angeles suburbs to submerge ourselves in gleaming, toxic pools. Now we behold the Lamb and invite others to do the same. The marvelous Lutheran Church that sponsored us has a huge exterior cross emerging from a rock fountain. We entered those waters and were saved. Again.

With a 75% LGBT+ population, Palm Springs prides itself on having a City Council composed solely of LGBT members. We opened our doors to all who thirst. Cross and fountain await, smack dab in the middle of downtown!

A few persons asked me there about Fr. James Martin who also seeks to be a bridge between LGBT+ Catholics and the Church. He recently had a meeting with Pope Francis who Martin claimed was altogether supportive of his initiative ‘to offer this most marginalized group in the Church welcome, inclusion, and love.’

First, what I like about Martin.

He reminds us that many persons who identify as LGBT+ are baptized Catholics. That should encourage all family and friends to pray: ‘Awaken each to the truth of his or her status as a child of the Father, deeply loved!’

He points out that persons who are hidden in their own divided sexuality may tend to demonize persons who are ‘out and proud’: ‘Remove the beam from our own eyes, O God, that we may behold the speck in our loved ones!’

He also underscores Pope Francis’ call to accompany LGBT+ persons patiently and mercifully. We are dealing with people--not abstract ‘issues’—who need our presence over the long haul.

But Martin’s reminder that we are all sinners in need of mercy rings false. He deceives us here. He does not view the LGBT+ set as sinners in need of a Savior. Rather than absolving them of sin, he claims they have none, at least in the sexual arena. The Church Martin invites them into is cross-free. Behold the Lamb? No need. Let the good father assume it by crying ‘peace’ when there is none.

Let me be specific. Father Martin insists that as a priest he would never challenge Church

teachings. But he already has. He efforts to alter the Catholic understanding of same-sex tendencies and action. The Catechism defines the latter as ‘intrinsically disordered’ (#2357) and other documents define the attraction as ‘objectively disordered.’ Martin seems to support a new definition that reframes same-sex desires and actions as ‘differently ordered.’ No disorder, no need for redemption. Behold the man who takes away the sin of the world.

He writes that LGBT+ persons will not ‘receive’ the call to chastity. I think what he means is that the Church needs to wake up to the fact that LGBT+ persons should be free to act upon their feelings. Martin makes a big deal of how the Church houses all kinds of traditional sinners; what the heck, why not welcome a host of exotic ones too? And let’s not call them sinners! He cannot advocate for LGBT+ sexual liberties and not redraw the moral boundary lines for all persons. Martin wants to redefine chastity for us altogether.

Finally, Martin advocates for a new anthropology—the ‘LGBT+ Catholic’—and wants this language in Church documents. Here we face the difference between ‘disordered’ and ‘differently ordered’. If a person’s SSA or gender dysphoria is disordered, then why build an identity around a disorder? Isn’t it more congruent with Scripture and Catholic teaching to identify with the Source of our ‘ordering’—Jesus, who defines us as sons and daughters of the Father, and endows us with His Spirit to make it so? But here Martin is consistent. He sets up a new ‘order’ by normalizing a range of gender identity fractures and placing them on par with persons inclined toward the opposite gender. Martin wants to integrate LGBT+ reality in the Church. He wants Jesus’ Bride to take her cues from all the rainbowed institutions of our western culture.

Martin’s good intentions veil deception. In undermining Church teaching, he removes the heart of the Gospel for LGBT+ persons. Behold the Lamb? Nah. Behold the sham.

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