

Ignite the Torch

‘The Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children by restoring their hope like a torch carried among the people to enlighten those who have lost their way in the midst of a storm.’ Joy of Love, Pope Francis

While Pope Francis magnificently honors marriage in his recent exhortation, he falters in fueling the torch necessary to enlighten persons lost in the storm surrounding homosexuality. Yes, he exposes the lie of constructing one’s own gender ‘self’. But he falls fall short of illuminating Christ Crucified and Raised as the fire that can consume the disordered heart and win it over to holy love.

Pope Francis does not connect the dots. On the one hand he alludes to misbegotten cultural shifts like ‘gay marriage’ and the folly of being tossed about by self-serving, shortsighted desires. He highlights the Gospel passages in which sexual sinners are admonished by Jesus ‘to live more worthy lives’ as His love awakens ‘consciousness of sin.’ Yet his pastoral directives for enlightening persons lost in the gender storm are bland and dim; Francis invokes accompaniment and the law of gradualism and other references to walking with persons in pain. All good—but none adequate to awaken the soul in darkness to the saving light of Jesus.

I longed to hear Francis refer to repentance and sexual sin in the same sentence. He hesitates here. Inspired by the Spirit and commensurate with the damage done, the urgent call for repentance seems in line with Francis’ consistent regard for ‘the immense psychological burden’ that unfaithful adults impose upon children. We serve justice to kids by returning to the Father and casting off destructive identities and relationships. By aspiring to be faithful ‘gender’ witnesses, we the repentant do our part to meet the identity needs of children.

For this, we the Church need to declare the clear and compassionate call for all to turn to Jesus amid confused identities. Repentance is the base on which our eyes are opened and we can begin to make wise choices. Yes we slowly progress in our moral formation, and yes such formation is founded on the Word who exposes our chains and offers Himself as the key.

I now live in a Catholic world where the slight majority uphold gay unions, are intolerant (often cruel) to persons who lovingly refuse to bless ‘gay unions’, and whose clergy men tend to invoke a repentance-free mercy for persons with SSA. Where is the Church who blazes like a torch in order to enlighten her members? Where are the merciful lights to guide lost loved ones home? May God fan into flame a host of blazing lights to light the way in the storm that Francis describes but inadequately guides us through in this turbulent hour.

‘For Zion’s sake, I will not be silent; for Jerusalem’s sake, I will not remain quiet, until her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.’ (IS 62:1)