

Smoke, Not Fire

Two weeks ago, a Roman Catholic priest from Milwaukee came out as 'gay'--made by God that way--to his congregation in an effort to integrate his 'gay' self and to help LGBTers follow his path to authenticity.

Blazing a trail with his fiery witness? Nah....Father Gregory Greiten's effort leaked poisonous gas into the Church; he made smoke, not fire by reducing the God who answers His children with fire to a toothless ancient who wearily confirms our fractured lives. For this Jesus suffered an agonizing death and descent into hell? The smoke that shrouds and chokes, not the fire that illumines and awakens our authentic selves, is the effect of churchmen who render God impotent.

I struggle to include in a brief blog all the errors in Greiten's thinking. Let me try.

First, there is no such thing as a 'gay' person, if by that one means an individual who is intrinsically rooted in same-sex attractions. That is a popular myth. A person is not born a homosexual or a transsexual or a bisexual. He or she is born to realize her or his dignity as a beloved daughter or son of the Father and as a gendered gift to the whole world. Father Greiten disagrees; he purports that 'God created him to be gay.' Says who? Not God...

Secondly, Greiten confuses one's feelings with an identity. I suspect, like many persons (myself included) with a history of same-sex attraction, the depth and persistence of such desires can tempt one into forming a 'self' around them. But such identity formation is alien to the call of Christ. He invites every follower to surrender all other identifications and to take up the Cross as the mark of the new and true self (JN 12: 25). Every priest should know this. If a fatherly leader loses sight of that Cross, how dull the vision for a weaker son! Smoke, not fire.

Thirdly, every priest should know that the Church names homosexual desires as disordered in that they frustrate openness to life: the unitive and procreative purposes of our sexuality. Jesus upheld His Father's will for man and woman together to constitute His plan for sexual love (Matt. 19: 4-6). Of course many live far from that reality. No matter! God has made a way for persons with disordered desires to be drawn into His merciful gaze and so be 'loved out' of every other identification, especially one based on disordered desires. That a priest should base an identity on disordered desires, then urge others to follow his example, is beyond me. Better put, because Jesus' love has shattered every effort of the 'gay' world to name and animate me, I would say that Greiten's example is beneath me.

Fourth, what to say to the response to Greiten's witness? His congregation gave him a standing ovation, and apparently his Archbishop blessed his 'coming out.' That is for me the worst news of all. It reflects a worldly church nearly dead to the power of the Gospel. Nearly dead. I would put her in St. Paul's category of being 'struck down but not yet destroyed' (2Cor. 4:9). She lives still because Jesus' lives just as I live today to the beauty of Jesus and my wife and kids and

grandkids and a whole new horizon that Jesus opens for every longing, broken heart.

The Church must reclaim her truth and her witness today. You who like me share a history of disorder vanquished only by the greater love of Jesus—let us arise in this hour and become the Church who illuminates the Cross amid shadow and smoke. Let our lives shine forth the glory of Him who authors and redeems true personhood.