

ON THE DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE AS GOD GAVE IT; AND THE WELCOME PLACE OF GAY PERSONS IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

INTRODUCTION – This article is a combination of an article that I wrote three and a half years ago, with an addendum that is current to the writing of this article.(2/2012)

ON CHASTE BODIES AND PURE MINDS: *FRIENDSHIP*

INTRODUCTION

The ideas in this essay may be among the most idealistic you have ever read, but I am going to write them down anyway! It's my job! I am a Catholic priest! And a priest deals with the Ideal! As I pray and think and look around at the world and talk to people and listen to people – I say to myself: "There must be a 'bottom line' – there must be 'something that is a *real key* to explaining and understanding everything else". Now, I am not saying that I have found *the* "magic key" – but I have found something that at least gives me something to filter a lot of what I see and hear through. It is helpful to me! Maybe it can be helpful to you.

This paper, I suppose, is written for Catholics – because the full ramifications of what I will propose is most easily understood within the context of the Catholic Church; but it is also written for Catholics and non-Catholics alike who have a less than full understanding of what is going on in the Church – and might find these words informative and instructive in some way – and perhaps also controversial. I pray that the Holy Spirit will do what he wants with each and every word, and every pair of eyes that reads them.

I have written other papers – and I seem to be saying a lot that, as human beings we come into this world for a stay that could last up to 70, 80 or even more years – comprised of various stages and experiences that for

the most part we are not prepared – no matter how prepared we might think we get! There seems to be no “Owner’s Manual” for being human!

What I am proposing here might be a possible “Preface” to such a manual. You be the judge!

Most of what I say these days has something to do, in one way or another, with Pope John Paul II’s magnificent comprehensive work entitled “The Theology of the Body” or “The Gospel of the Body.” A lot of what I will say here reflects my reading of Christopher West’s explanation of the work – which, frankly, was a whole lot easier to read than the original work as the Pope wrote it! (I tried that but found it a bit too technical for me!) It will be clear, though, when I express my own opinions and put forth my own synthesis and application of what the Holy Father has so brilliantly shared with us.

I must say here too, that this particular essay is what I consider a “Prequel” to the paper I wrote just before this entitled: “ON LIFE,” in which I discussed three of the many major moral issues of our day – in which I proposed a possible solution: yes, Pope John Paul’s **Theology of the Body!** After writing that, some important ideas came to me – and thus comes what you are now reading!

In the previous paper (ON LIFE) I purported the grave seriousness of the moral issues outlined because they had to do with the very “stuff of life itself” – *the eggs and the sperm and the contribution of human soul and personhood from God which went into the creation of a human being!* Tampering with these elements in any way is always a grave matter. Having the government of one’s country supporting the misuse of them is a grave moral evil which must somehow be resolved – quickly!

And so this paper begins where the other paper began as well – with our first parents (Adam and Eve) in the Garden of Eden! But this time, instead of beginning with the God / Adam and Eve / Marriage sequence, I would like to interject what came to me as a pretty astounding “prequel” to this process: **friendship**. How often we gloss over and undervalue the word

friend in scripture: BUT ESPECIALLY AT THIS VITALLY IMPORTANT STAGE OF HUMAN CREATION. God created Adam and Eve TO BE **FRIENDS!** He created Eve to be Adam's *friend*. He told them to "be fruitful and multiply" in a family of *friends*. He created ALL OF THEM to be **HIS FRIENDS!**

FRIENDS FIRST! This is an amazing, if not astounding concept and reality – when you really stop to think about it! And this is precisely what we are about to do: stop and really take a look at this primordial relationship of *friendship* on which all other relationships seem to be built! (This concept is mentioned in John Paul's TOTB – but I am purposely highlighting it here – because I feel that it might be a "way in, "an irresistible point of interest" to get people reading that work which no doubt was a gift of the Holy Spirit; at the end of this paper I will also highlight a couple of topics that John Paul left out of TOTB in its initial stages, but which are quite relevant to this topic I am purporting).

If we look at two ends of a bookend scenario: God created us to be *friends*; one day we will be joined with him in one great *communion of friendship* at the Nuptial Celebration of his Son Jesus – the theme of *Friendship / Friendship Lost / Friendship Regained / Friendship Fulfilled* – runs through it all.

The initial source of *friendship*, God himself, is an **eternal ecstatic exchange of love** – this is the **FRIENDSHIP OF LOVE** in which we were created and in which we will participate fully in the end!

What intervened, of course, between the beginning of *friendship* and the end of it was mankind's refusal of God's *friendship* and all that went with it! God respected man's freedom of choice and sadly accepted the condition of broken *friendship* between himself and his beloved creations. Right away, though, he formed a plan to restore the *friendship* – and it meant sending his Son, *his Friend*, Jesus – to be *our Friend*, our Teacher and our Savior.

Jesus then, is our Lord, our God and our *Friend!*

What is interesting here to note is that even before the actual reconciliation took place and the restoration of the *friendship* between mankind and God the Father – Jesus “prophesied” loudly and clearly his purpose on earth: **HE CALLED MOSTLY EVERYONE FRIEND!** which was an amazing thing due to the fact that technically we were all still ENEMIES OF GOD and certainly not his *friends*. He died for us while we were still enemies in order to re-establish the broken *friendship* and give credence to his prophecy of calling us *friends!* He clearly wanted us to EXPERIENCE *FRIENDSHIP* WITH GOD (with him) AND WITH ONE ANOTHER!

Mankind now has available to it the merits of the reconciliation, the redemption, the restoration of *friendship* that Jesus accomplished for us all. There is only one condition that goes with it: **belief and action!** Believing that it is so, that Jesus is the One who accomplished these amazing things; the action of living like we believe it to be so – having his teachings and his presence make a profound difference in the way we approach and live out our daily lives. We must apply what happened on the Cross and in the Tomb – or else what good are they to us or to anyone else?

A couple of interesting references from the Roman Missal: In Eucharistic Prayer IV we read: “Even when he disobeyed you and lost your *friendship* you did not abandon him to the power of death, but helped all men to seek and find you.” This, of course, refers to Adam and Eve’s broken relationship of *friendship* that needed healing by God himself for it to be valid, true and lasting. (This same notion is evident in the Preface: Sunday in Ordinary Time VIII: “When your children sinned and wandered far from your *friendship*, you reunited them with yourself through the blood of your Son and the power of the Holy Spirit.)

Again, in the First Reconciliation Eucharistic Prayer we read: “At the end of the meal, knowing that he was to reconcile all things in himself by the blood of his cross, he took the cup, filled with wine. Again he gave you thanks, handed the cup to his *friends*, and said: Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my blood...which will be shed for you, and for all.” In these very words of consecration the word *friends* is used.

Previous to this Jesus said: “I no longer call you servants, I call you *friends*, for I have made known to you all that the Father has told me.” And, “There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s *friends*. He said to them too: “You are my *friends* if you do what I command you!”

Jesus, we know had many *friendships*, some of them very close: with John the Apostle, with Mary Magdalene, with Lazarus, Martha and Mary, with Zacchaeus, with the Samaritan Woman, with each of his Apostles – with many others! And I would imagine that he made each one feel like they were his closest and dearest *friend* – because he treated them with great dignity, great respect and wanted nothing from them, *but rather desired always to be allowed to give something to them in service!* They laughed, cried, had good times and shared the bad times! They were REAL ecstatic *friends* – (and what do you know, there was no “sex” involved – no “orgasmic” expression of *friendship*).

There are many other Scriptural references that back up the notion that *friendship* is of prime and primary importance. For example: Exodus 33:11 “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his *friend*.” 1 Samuel 20:42 “Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, for we have sworn *friendship* with each other in

the name of the Lord, saying “The Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.”[This is a classic model of true and real *friendship*. It also foreshadows the experience that the members of the Christian community would have with one another). Job: 2:11 “When Job’s three *friends* heard about all the troubles that had come upon him, they set out from their home and met together by agreement to go and sympathize with him and comfort him.” Job 12:4 “I have become a laughingstock to my *friends*...though righteous and blameless” Job 42:10 “After Job had prayed for his *friends*, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.” [Job praying for his *friends* who deserted him is a prophecy of Jesus praying for his *friends*, the Apostles, who deserted him after his Last Supper with them.] Proverbs 17:17 “A *friend* loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” Proverbs 18:24 “A Man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a *friend* who sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 27:6 “Wounds from a *friend* can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.”

Ecclesiastes 4:10 “If one falls down, his *friend* can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up.” Song of Solomon 5:16 “His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my *friend*, O daughters of Jerusalem.” [This is an amazing reference of the relationship of *friend* that ought to exist between married lovers!] Jeremiah 3:4 “Have you not just called to me: ‘my father, my *friend* from my youth?’

The gospels are filled with references to *friendship*, including these: Matthew 11:19 “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a *friend* of tax collectors and sinners.’” Jesus is constantly calling people: “*friend*” Matthew 20:13 “*friend*, I

am not being unfair to you. Did you not agree to work for a denarius?" Matthew 22:12 "*friend*, how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" Matthew 26:50 (to Judas) "*friend*, do what you came for." Luke 5:20 "When Jesus saw their faith, he said, '*friend*, your sins are forgiven.'" Luke 21:16 "You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and *friends*, and they will put some of you to death."

There are many references to *friendship* in the writings of St. John: John 11:11 "Our *friend* Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." John 21:5 After the resurrection "Jesus called out to them, '*friends*, haven't you any fish?'" [This is enormously significant: Jesus reaction to the desertion of his best *friends* after the Last Supper and at his Crucifixion was to offer them peace, and to call the more than ever *friend*! Amazing!]

In the writings of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James and St. Jude and once again in the Letters of St. John there are numerous references to the Christian community itself as being a "community of *friends*." The whole notion of "communion of saints" as a "communion of *friends*" begins here: more about this later.

Let it suffice to say that in the early centuries of the Church: the term *friend*, the concept of *friendship* and the activity of BEING *FRIENDS* **had a very special and even sacred meaning**: after all JESUS HIMSELF – CAME TO BE OUR *FRIEND* – AND TO RESTORE *FRIENDSHIP* TO ITS ORIGINAL DIGNITY!

The Fathers of the Church including St. Ambrose, St. Augustine and St. Jerome all had something to say about *friendship* (as no doubt did or do all of the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church). Jerome said: "The *friendship*

that can cease has never been real!” [St. Jerome also is said to have considered a lion his own *friend*; opening the possibility to the reality of the special relationship that man can and certainly does have with animals, especially domesticated pets. “A man’s best *friend* truly could be his dog!]

These early Fathers of course based their ideas of *friendship* – in addition to a theological basis gotten from the Church itself, also on the writings of Cicero and Aristotle – who based their notions on pagan ideas of *friendship*. This in itself ought to prove that the basic elements of *friendship* transcend philosophy and theology to what is essentially true, good and holy – to God the Author and Origin of *friendship*! Cicero in general, but Aristotle more particularly, categorized *friendships* into three types: *friendships* of utility, of pleasure, of virtue - the last being the most desirable and the most pure.

I would categorize them, based on the premise of this paper, into just two types: of the married, of the celibate – human persons. In the long run, men and women are either married or single. If they are married there is a manifestation of true and real *friendship* that differs to some degree from the manifestation of true and real *friendship* that occurs with the non-married, single and therefore, categorically sexually celibate person. Married *friendship* involves a sexual expression (adding the “orgasmic” to the “ecstatic” – because it participates in God’s intention to create another human person); non-married celibate *friendship* does not involve this dimension – it simply has the potential to be ecstatic. Yet, both are full, complete and meaningful experiences of real, true, genuine and authentic *friendship* – which originates in God and, if real, will lead back to God, the giver of the gift of *friendship* in the first place!

What Aristotle and others consider *friendships* of utility and pleasure – are not really categorical *friendships* at all, in my estimation. *friendship* necessitates as close as possible a full disclosure: the fuller, the more real the *friendship*. Scripture tells us: “I know my sheep and my sheep know me!” (They are my *friends*. I will lay down my life for them”.) GOD certainly KNOWS all about us, for he made us – but in order for us to KNOW him he would have to REVEAL himself – which is what he did in sending JESUS, his Word, his Son, his *friend* – to be our knowledge, our Brother, and our *friend*! What we call “*friends*” (of utility and pleasure) are not really then *friends* at all – they are merely “acquaintances” with whom we have more or less intense usually temporary, although sometimes more extended bonds.

A *friend* is appreciated, loved and is a subject of our attention *for his or her own sake* – as purely and fully as possible – rather than for our own utility and pleasure. It is true, “a *friend*” is someone who knows all about us, and loves us anyway!” (Thanks be to God: otherwise, the Word of God would never have become flesh!)

What comes close to my definition of *friendship* is Aristotle’s understanding of *friendship* of virtue. These *friends* (between two or as I would believe, more than two) are each virtuous in themselves, they put the other(s) first: for the other person’s sake; they are interested in similar virtuous and Spirit-based ideas, discussions, activities and projects; there is a mutual respect and sense of helpfulness: they wish their *friend*(s) well for their *friends’* sake, in a sense they are “soul-mates” – the

other person becomes, in a sense an extension of oneself. This definition by Aristotle I agree with in general, but I sense that it can be a bit overly idealistic. For in that it is difficult to find anyone who is 100% interested in another person's interests. However, I do subscribe to the intent of purity and the chastity and the self-less-ness that is intimated here. These definitely tie in with the theological understanding that true *friendship* - as given by God - requires.

*I must insert here that for any of what I am saying to make sense there must be a clear, concise and precise use of the term "*friend*." For my purposes it requires a God-based, God-goaled dynamic relationship between two, or among more than two, persons.

So, what do we do with Aristotle's *friendships* of utility and pleasure – the very first thing is to NOT CALL THEM *FRIENDSHIPS* AT ALL. They do not fit into the pure definition of *friendship* that I am attempting to formulate here, and therefore ought not to be associated with *friendship* (for my purposes here). A true and real *friend* cannot be a person with whom we have minimal and or superficial contact – for utilitarian or self-gratifying purposes. Therefore, the supermarket clerk, the financial advisor, a teammate, a classmate, a barraksmate and a host of other useful, close and even necessary one-one or group relationships are more adequately described as "acquaintanceships" "companionships" "partnerships" or as parties who are "allies" "associates" buddies" "chums" "cohorts" "colleagues" "compatriots" "comrades" "confidants"

“consorts” “cronies” “familiar” “mates” “pals”
“playmates” “sidekicks.”

It would be helpful (for my purposes here) if “*friend*” were reserved and used only for those who are attempting to develop the above described God-centered relationship! Just as we then “misuse” the word *friend* (according to this construct) – which ought to be a truly “sacred word” right up there with God the Father, and Jesus and the Holy Spirit – there ought to be as comprehensive but more “secular” one-word-term for the above named non-theological combinations of people. I have no idea what that word might be, but I hope, at least you can see my point, that it might be helpful to have one.

A *friend*, summarily, is a consistent and ever-present (although not necessarily physically present) person in one’s life for the pursuit of and mutual enjoyment of what is right, good and holy: that is: GOD. A *friend* is not an object in any sense, but rather a subject placed there most always by God himself] because everyone basically needs to “wash feet” - as Jesus commanded his *friends* to do – to prove his *friendship* with him – and to see to the welfare of the *friend*! Even the non-religious can no doubt see the logic in this! Everyone needs at least ONE TRUE *FRIEND* in one’s life, at all times!: everyone needs to “wash feet!”

CHASTITY

A concept that ought to touch EVERY relationship of *friendship* is that of **CHASTITY**. When one hears the term “chaste” or “chastity” one immediately, most likely, thinks of sex: this “chastity” must have something to do with sexual activity. Well, this is only partly true, and one of the definitions. Chastity can have to do with the absence of sexual activity; but it can also have to do with the attitude of mind and heart that is open, free, clear, clean and pure of any sort of defilements, so to receive what a giver might have to offer. In our case here the “giver” is God, and the “gift” is everything that has to do with life, holiness and goodness. A great much of the time sexual activity can bring with it all kinds of baggage that makes it closed, costly, cluttered and filled with all kinds of defilements, distractions and impediments to the open channel that is necessary for the experience of true sexual union – this is why **chastity is actually sexual activity’s best ally!** And it is not only sexual activity’s best ally in a relationship, but also non-sexual activity’s best ally in a relationship.

In every day in age, including our own, there is a mistaken idea that sexual activity [and all kinds and degrees of ‘foreplay activity’] – alone or with another – is a requirement for healthy living. It is almost as though “sex” is looked upon in the same category as “food” and “drink” and “air” and “exercise.” “Sex” needs to be taken out of that line-up because **it is not absolutely necessary for a balanced life!** What is absolutely necessary however is to know how to deal with hormonal activity and energies that are produced in every body whether that body is destined for marriage or not!

Some may say: well, animals have food, drink, air, exercise *and sexual activity on quite a regular basis* so why can’t I? Because, though you are “animal-like” on the one-hand; you have a rational mind, and a human will which animals do not have – you can conclude by your own study, reflection and prayer that sexual activity for the animal is *instinctual*, but for the human it is both instinctual and a conscious, decisive cooperative

venture that includes consultation with the Creator of all – who is entrusting you with co-creative powers with him – to populate his household the way in which he wants it done and not you!

In the plan of God – who gave it – sexual activity in humans is meant to be used in a truly “sacramental” way – as an activity which is a sign of the “great mystery” of his own self, and his love for us – and his plans for our future with him; any other use of sex for human beings is misuse. Human sexual activity ought *never to be used* in an *experimental* kind of way – either alone or with another; in a *recreational* sort of way – alone or with another; in a *therapeutic* sort of way – alone or with another; in an *exploitative* kind of way: no matter how well-intentioned – alone or with another. This ought to be taught “from the crib” – so that generations of children and young adults having a balanced, rational and prayerful approach to “sexual / hormonal feelings” which can be transformed into projects of selfless giving and true care for others in need.

The bottom line here comes down to the amazing freedom, happiness and even joy that comes from **chastely keeping the channels open between oneself and God** – so that grace can pass to and fro, inspirations can pass to and fro, and prayer itself can pass to and fro. With **GOD AS OUR BEST FRIEND**– he will show us how to live in the world as he has already chosen for us as the best possible way – either as a married person, or as a single person [or as a single person on the way to marriage]. Either way if we make it a top priority to preserve our **chastity of body and purity of mind** we will surely win out both now and forever in an eternity that is wonderful beyond our wildest imaginings!

CHASTITY AND THEOLOGICAL FRIENDSHIP – SALVATION HISTORY IN TERMS OF FRIENDSHIP

I have already mentioned this theme above, but I would like to restate it here in capsule form. God created mankind to be his *friends*. Mankind refused God’s *friendship* and made *friends* with the world (Satan) instead.

God desired to reconcile mankind and restore the *friendship* and so he sent his own beloved Son/Friend Jesus – to be our Savior and our *friend* – and to show us the way home – basically to *FRIENDSHIP HALL!* *Scripture, the life of the early Church, the lives and witness of the saints, and their reference as a communion of souls who help us still with their friendship, the references made to the salvific restoration of friendship between mankind and God the Father, by means of the blood of Jesus is found in the Roman Missal and in the Liturgy of the Hours all make it very clear that above all else there is the sacred, holy, pure, chaste relationship of friendship which seems to be of paramount interest in the mind of God himself, as well as in the mind of Jesus, and in the mind of the Church!* Can we dispute such evidence?

Perhaps the relationship of St. John and Jesus can be mentioned here as an example of how God intends us to relate to him and to one another as members of the Church. John after all was Jesus' "best" *friend*. The other apostles knew that the "love of *friendship*" involved in their close *FRIENDSHIP* was especially deep. Jesus, of course, had, and continues to have his favorites. Why should he not? He loves us all equally in that he did die for us as *friends*, but there are some who interact with him in a personally more open, deep, trusting kind of way who can be considered *DEAR, CLOSE FRIENDS!* Throughout the ages of the Church many of the saints have pleased Jesus and his Father very much and have been considered great *friends!* And so, just as John was called to a special relationship with Jesus – there are two categories of people who likewise are called to a special relationship with him because of the witness value of the relationship: the first is the married couple; the second is the "confirmed" celibate. I would like to discuss both now!

CHASTITY AND THE FRIENDSHIP OF MARRIAGE

First of all: **only celibate friends ought to marry**. Then, just as the purity and chastity of John's relationship with Jesus led him to an ecstatic experience of love (we will see more about this later) so too the purity and chastity of married love can do the same thing. *Married love can be a participation in and experience of the ecstatic eternal exchange of love between the Father and the Son (which is the Holy Spirit)*. This eternal exchange is a definition of the Trinity! What is so wonderful is that here, in this context, God gives the go-ahead, the green-light to consummate the marriage with the *marital embrace* [the physical, emotional, spiritual union of persons: bodies/minds/spirits] which is open to the creation of new life! **This is the "orgasmic" dimension of the "ecstatic" that is reserved for married couples only!** This is the only setting where all of the ramifications of such a union can be satisfied and met! If in the process, the husband and wife, in cooperation with God himself as the third contributor, create a new life: a child – then heaven rejoices, the Father is delighted and the parents can truly count themselves blessed in a special way! This is not the time to discuss the methods and conditions for limiting the number of births – let it suffice to say that the Church is not as out-of-touch as many people these days might think. Hopefully, reading on will supply some of the desired information.

In brief: as we said above: sexual activity is *not* a daily requirement for "happy living." In fact, such a practice would frankly be quite exhausting, I would imagine! The KEY therefore to a healthy married life and a reasonable number of children is the embracing of **marital chastity** as a very high priority. Yes, this includes abstinence, even a lot of it. But, with all of the other kinds of truly satisfying yet not physically arousing types of signs of affection – a much saner, tamer, refreshing quality model of married life would emerge. Lust will have taken a back seat, where it belongs [if not jettisoned from the vehicle all together] and real love will have taken front stage. How many couples secretly marry just to legitimize unbridled lust? This is no

reason to be married at all. Only heartache and eventual dissolution could be the predictable outcome of such unions. Marital chastity, rightly understood and freely chosen could make a very big and positive difference in anyone's marriage – and dramatically reduce the need to resort to divorce.

Married life and love are about inviting the presence of the Holy Spirit into each and every activity, so that each one brims with possibility, shimmers with enthusiasm, and exudes the sweet smell of the sweat of human kindness! If God is not carrying a large portion of the ups and downs of a marriage – then the couple is simply “not doing it right,” not getting the most out of what can be there for the receiving!

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are *self control: chastity – balance of life – respect for all others – self-sacrificing giving to everyone in need – and a deep and gut level feeling of doing right and yes, even, feeling good – we call this JOY!* But if “feeling good” 24/7 is the *goal* of any marriage, then it is doomed to failure!

CHASTITY AND THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE CELIBATE

The relationship of St. John the Apostle with Jesus, and in fact, with Mary as well (both whom were at the foot of the Cross of Jesus on Calvary) speaks of the *ecstatic nature* of a specifically chosen celibate lifestyle. John experienced a very deep, joyful, tender and giving relationship with Jesus; he also had a similar relationship with Mary, his Mother, after Jesus gave him to her so that he could look after her – and for that matter – so that they could look after each other. There was nothing “orgasmic” about John's relationship with either Jesus or Mary – but both relationships were, no doubt, quite “ecstatic” – a true earthly, created experience of the Uncreated non-sexual boundlessly joyful eternal exchange of love among the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. John could not have written about love and *friendship* as he did [his Gospel and Letters are filled with these themes] – if he did not have this profound experience. But what is so amazing is that

the experience was not just for him alone – it is for anyone and everyone who allows Jesus to be their *Friend*, to be their Savior, to be their Redeemer.

At the Last Supper, Jesus sat with his *friends* and gave them himself as Eucharist. This action, foreshadowing the events of the next day when he would give his life for these, his *friends*, to PROVE HIS LOVE – and to be their ransom and the forgiveness of sins for them and for all – was an astounding event. The Eucharist we celebrate at Mass in his memory as he asked us to do is a real rekindling and refueling of that ONE TREMENDOUS *FRIENDSHIP* that changed the world forever! We receive Jesus as our Lord, our God, our Savior and our *Friend*! **We must never forget HE IS OUR FRIEND!**

Celibacy, then, as modeled by Jesus himself, frees a person to love all others as *friends*, rather than to love a family first and then as many others as one can. *Celibacy is a gift from God*. It is not, in its confirmed sense, for everyone, because only God can give the call and the grace to live it as it ought to be lived. But for those people: being fully engaged in the “business of ministering” to God’s people in the way God chooses using them – the celibate way can be an ecstatic and wonderful experience. The exchange of love between them and God’s people can mirror that of the Trinity itself – and that of the Christ of the Eucharist! Therefore, religious life – a calling to be a brother or sister, or priest in a Religious Congregation [or a priest in the diocesan setting] is God’s way of getting to a great many people to get his Word to them – using the generous donation of the life of the one called! There are also persons who likewise feel called to be celibate and chaste, but not in a formal religious setting. As ordinary single Christians [men and women] they can still be very much used by God to minister to others – in many small and even great ways. They too can reflect God’s desire to be *friends* with everyone.

This brings up an interesting but more difficult to reconcile fact. This has to do with “the real world” conditions that exist in the face of these ideal propositions. In the “real world” everything is not so simply “black and white” – there are, in fact, a vast amount of shades of

gray. It takes a great deal of work to understand and maintain any degree of the living out of an ideal. I know this. Everyone knows this. But this does not mean that the ideals do not or ought not exist, or that they should not be held up as goals even though falling short of them is to be expected.

The real-world condition that I would like to address is the “sexual” dimension known as “homo-or-same sexual-orientation” that a person might be born with. No doubt the arrangement of chromosomes that results in a person being born with a homo-sexual orientation rather than a hetero-or-opposite sexual-orientation comes from a very long history of genetic and breeding chance mixings and matchings. Sometimes we hear it said that “God made me gay so he must approve of me!” Well, this is both true and not true. Your parents actually made the physical body of a gay person; God contributed the soul and personhood (image and likeness) at the same moment of conception. So, technically, speaking God *indirectly* makes a gay person’s body, while God *directly* makes his soul and personhood as he does for everyone. And as far as approval goes – God most certainly loves and approves of the gay individual as the human being he is and who is born into the world! But, he cannot approve of same-sexed sexual activity – because, as was demonstrated above it does not correspond to the approved of use of the sexual parts by individuals – males or females – and in the context that God himself intended them to be used in: marriage of a man and a woman! This would simply be going against his own laws; and why would he do that?

Does this mean that the gay person is then to be denied the experience of love? *By no means!* Gay persons have the same rights as everyone else has **to respond to God’s gift of love by experiencing the ecstatic exchange of love that comes from a deep and abiding relationship with him, and with other persons, other *friends!*** The “orgasmic” ecstatic is reserved for the married couple! Gay persons then – finding themselves in a “genetic situation” over which they have no control can find an enormous amount of

satisfaction in participating in the celibate, non-sexual but very real, helpful and personally rewarding invitation to *genuine friendships* [with one or more persons] that can last for life – and beyond. This is discussed much more fully in my previous paper (ON LIFE) – but having this entire paper as a prelude to it (or a reference after reading it) should make it all much clearer.

Again, *friendship* does not have to be “orgasmic” to be real and “loving”; but every *friendship* has the potential to be a dynamic, life giving, ecstatic exchange of love that can see us through life and into eternity!

CHASTITY AND THE *FRIENDSHIP* OF THE CHRISTIAN

This brings me to the first of the last three points that I want to make. Since Jesus came to restore *friendship* to its original status and power – and since the Church he founded is a community of his disciples, his *friends* – and since all of the sacraments have to do with the *friendship* (one way or another) – and since the Church is to be our guide through life: then the real authority on this *friendship* that is our origin, our companion and our goal ought to be the CHURCH! If Christ is our *friend!* then the CHURCH TOO OUGHT TO BE OUR *FRIEND!* and it is up to all of us to regard it as such, treat it as such, respect it as such, love it as such – which means starting with all of the people we see each week when we go to Church: the Church is the people in the pews, the Church is the priest at the altar, the Church is the Bishops and the Pope in Rome!

All of us – if we are true to our divine origins - are meant to be *friends* with God and with one another – come what may! This sounds very idealistic – but, it has to start somewhere – belief in this idea, and willingness to put it into practice! And then once we are *friends* within our own walls – in our own parishes – in our own families – in our own circles – then we have the obligation to take that *friendship*, that other-centered outlook, that JESUS - to everyone, everywhere! He asked us, his *friends*, to do that! Can we deny him his last request before ascending into heaven! Empowered by his

subsequent gift of the Spirit – **WE CAN DO IT! WE CAN BEFRIEND THE WORLD! and prepare it for eternal life!**

CHASTITY AND THE COMMUNION OF FRIENDS – SAINTS

Yes, those who lived Christian lives and have gone before us, most especially the saints, the Church considers still to be alive and our *friends*, able to help us with their prayers until we one day join them in the great communion of saints: the great communion of *friends*! In the Preface for the Feast of All Saints we read: “Father...in our communion with them [the saints], you give us their *friendship*.”

“This actual companionship within the kingdom is available to everyone, and it is not extraordinary. The great gift of the saints is they each bring something. They offer their lives as *wells of nourishment*, as *complete circles of schools of prayer*. They are like our true *friends* on earth. They are filled with love; they love to be with us; they love to love us. They remind us that ‘the only requirement for the kingdom of God, is an emptiness only God can fill.’”[G.B. Caird]

CHASTITY AND THE WEDDING FEAST OF THE LAMB

At last, one day Christ will come again! He will come as JUDGE for those who need judging. There are some, who will just never want to be his *friend*, and they will not be forced to do so, but they will be faced with the consequences of their rejection of him and his *friendship*. It will be eternal separation from God and from everyone else forever – there are no *friends* in hell, *friendship* does not exist there! It is only just. The misuse of freedom must be punished!

But for the rest that will be a grand and glorious day: it will be JESUS’ WEDDING DAY: IT WILL BE THE LONG AWAITED WEDDING FEAST OF THE LAMB OF GOD. The Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world: who gave himself up for his Bride: the Church, will at last marry that

Bride, marry that Church: marry US – his *FRIENDS*! [It all fits in: the *FRIENDSHIP* CAME FIRST!] This is what it has all been leading to: GOD DESIRING TO MARRY HIS PEOPLE!

And this would not be a bigamous relationship, because all who are in Christ form just One Body, One Bride, One Christ - so Christ will actually be marrying One Bride – who is actually himself – so that ALL WILL BE ALL IN ALL – as God said it would be! This is the heart of the “great mystery” that is right in the middle of this whole discussion. A mystery that is not “too mysterious,” because God chose to tell us all about it, and invite us to participate in it fully, by means of his legate: Jesus!

And it will be as it was in the beginning, with Adam and Eve: *FRIENDS* MARRYING! This time the **ecstatic exchange of love** that we only experienced in shadow images on earth: in Marriage and in Eucharist, will now explode into a sense of wonderment, joy and awe that will be “beyond orgasmic” – it will be a constantly erupting experience of outpouring, self-donation and gift, that will be “exchanged” with God and with all forever! It will be astounding!

And what is the price of the ticket to get into heaven: **BELIEF! BELIEF IN GOD! BELIEF IN FRIENDSHIP! BELIEF IN MARRIAGE AS IT WAS GIVEN! BELIEF IN CELIBACY AS A FORESHADOWING OF THIS GREAT NEW DAY IN ETERNITY** - and a life on earth living like we really did **believe** these things!

Of course, the doorway into the marriage feast of heaven is DEATH! There is no other way to get there: but, as Pope John Paul intimated in the Theology of the Body (but did not have the space or time to develop fully there), **the redemption wrought by Christ on the Cross has robbed death of its sting**. Jesus is longing to share the fruits of his resurrection – newness of life – with everyone in the world. If we just remember the ecstatic, more-than-orgasmic sense of living that awaits us on the other side of that brief moment of transition: we will see it as a welcome moment in life, for life – even in the midst of all kinds of pain and suffering that might be part and parcel of both living and dying! We need fear nothing at all!

As I said at the beginning of this paper, what I have written is very idealistic and would allow for slim chances for implementation, but if anyone can glean anything from what has been said here and apply it at all, perhaps many of the moral and social problems of the day can find the smallest beginnings of a refreshing new approach to age old problems! These are all, as I have stated, ideas stemming from Pope John Paul II's magnificent work: *The Gospel of the Body* – "The Theology of the Body." I recommend reading at least a synopsis of it. We have everything to lose if we just keep on going the way we have been going or we just give up; we have so very much to gain, if we begin by making true and lasting *FRIENDS WITH GOD!*

It would seem then, that, if we truly were his *FRIEND WITH CHASTE BODIES AND PURE MINDS* what he commanded us to do would make much more sense to us – as would the loving prohibitions that he places on us for our own good and the good of others who deal with us!

In this way: moral issues such as the ones I discussed in (ON LIFE): abortion, embryonic stem cell research, gay marriage and other social issues such as war, hunger, disease, and the like - can more calmly, clearly and easily be dealt with!

FRIENDS TAKE CARE OF FRIENDS – ESPECIALLY THE LEAST OF THEM! Jesus told us of this REQUIREMENT FOR HIS WEDDING FEAST: **the activity of *friendship* is the WEDDING GARMENT** that we all must be wearing on the Day when the gates of heaven are opened to us and it is time for the FEASTING to begin!

"Whatsoever you do to the least of my brother and sisters, to the least of my *friends*, you do unto me! – Come, blessed of my Father, yours is the kingdom prepared for you!"

In summary:

What I am proposing for consideration is that *FRIENDSHIP* precedes MARRIAGE AND FAMILY, CONFIRMED CELIBACY and unconfirmed celibacy as well. *Friendship* is not only the key relationship in this life, but it is also the key to life in the Kingdom of God in the next world itself. It's all about REAL *FRIENDSHIP*!

From our earliest years we need to be taught that the basic stance in life is TO GIVE, and to receive only what is freely given to us – this is what REAL *FRIENDS* DO.

We need to be taught TO BE A “FOOTWASHING” *FRIEND*, rather than a collector of useful, self-gratifying acquaintances – we need to be very careful about how we used that holy and sacred word: *friend*!

We need to be taught that those who are CHASTE IN BODY and PURE IN MIND are the ones who find the most amount of ecstatic joy in real, true, genuine, authentic and GOD GIVEN *FRIENDSHIPS*. Often times this leads to married *friendship*; sometimes it leads to celibate *friendship*!

We need to be taught that in the end all God will want to know is if we are his *friend* or not; and can we prove it by how well we were able to know and love him, and were *friends* with those he put us on earth with!

What will YOUR answer be?

Father William Dinga, Jr.

December 8, 2008

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

ADDENDUM:

Given the current national debate over same-sex “marriage,” I have this to say simply: marriage, and “marriage” are not the same thing. Marriage is given by God to man and woman, for mutual support and companionship; and the procreation of children. “Marriage” is anything that fulfills the definition of a “satisfying mix” – for example, the “marriage” of marinade sauce and beef; the “marriage” texture and color; the “marriage” of any two entities that have a common goal. There is legal provision for marriage, but none for “marriage,” as it is not the same as marriage; and is subject more to *bylaw*, rather than law. Attempt at morphing the two concepts into one is illogical.

This argument also proceeds then to the notions of family, and “family!” Family is the natural outcome of marriage and parenting; “family” is the emotionally charged grouping of any set or group of persons. A bowling team can be a “real family,” in fact, any competitive sports teams end up being a “family” because of the nature of the day to day interaction and familiarity that occurs; any group of persons living together in close proximity often consider themselves as a “family.” But there is a vast difference between family and “family.”

Family is a closed unit of society that is God given; there is a natural vibe or understanding on how it all is supposed to work out. Now granted, it does always work out so idealistically, but there is no denying the knowledge of the operations. “Families” no matter “how committed they may be” – no matter how much good they can do for one another – and **I am not denying the possibility of any good work done – it may even be fine and noble and exemplary to the maximum – how could it be anything other than, with Jesus, Mary and Joseph being a “foster-family”:** but it still is “family” in quotation marks. There is also legal provision for family, but none for “family” as it is not the same as family; and is subject more to *bylaw*, rather than law. Attempt at morphing the two concepts into one is illogical, and ought to remain illegal.

Since I opened this segment with a reference to God, it is important to say that there is the reality of God, and the notion of “god” which are not even remotely related. It is God who set marriage and family into motion with the first parents; it is children of the first parents using false logic that has invented “marriage” and “family,” in a kind of “god-like” way. But these must

never be confused or morphed into one – especially for political or economic or emotionally soothing conventions.

To further the discussion: [this is an outline for a full treatise that might be forthcoming in the future]

ON THE METHOD OF TRULY MAKING GAY PERSONS FEEL WELCOME IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (as a model on how they can be accepted and given dignity and respect at large).

To discuss intelligently that which pertains to a Catholic's stand on anything requires the existence of three assumptions: that there is "objective reality,[things are not what I perceive them to be, making the reality "subject" to my individual perspective at this particular day and time – **they simply are what they are**, and I do in fact perceive it more or less accurately each and every day]; there is *objective supernatural law, there is objective natural law*. A *rightly-formed conscience* is tuned into the natural law, the supernatural law, objective reality, as given, to the degree that an individual person cooperates with the grace of God who wants to be in "conscience-based-dialogue" with him/her. The content of the objective reality (revelation – Scripture / Tradition) is Jesus Christ, the Person – who is also found in Word, Sacrament, dogma and doctrine. The fastest and easiest way to get to the bottom of any "issue" is to see it *in the light of Christ!*

Second Pre-note: Everything about "same-sex-marriage" has to do a "culture of compromise" and for this reason alone must be countered by the promotion of the "culture of Truth!" This said culture of Truth is a magnificent engagement in the fullness of life that God wants all of us to participate in. It is God who "makes the rules" in all of this: it takes a humble person of faith, one who is truly interested in the welfare of others to be willing to be a participant in Truth and Life with everyone else, rather than in opposition to everyone else!

Third Pre-Note: The most productive way for the Catholic Church to deal with the issue of same-sex marriage is from an entirely positive pastoral as well as sociological perspective. Otherwise, the Church appear to be condemning and attacking its own homosexual members: and being caught on the horns of a self-imposed dilemma: how can we welcome individual gay persons with open arms while at the same time being unsupportive of

any show or demonstration of “marital and familial” expressions that clearly go contrary to Church teaching. I propose the way to deal with this is to offer a clear, forthright and very positive presentation of the true role of a gay person in the Church and in the world today.

A kind of summary is this:

- Marriage, as gifted to the human race by God equals (=) *one man and one woman uniting to share friendship* and to be *the natural environment to welcome the gift of children* to complete their own supernaturally blessed union and for the survival of the human race – to the point at which God himself determines that the quota has been reached – at which time the end will come – and family life in heaven will be available for all who qualify according to his criteria. God spoke this definition and it cannot be altered!
- Anything else – any other kinds of “unions” “families” or “marriages” that *resemble* original and thus true marriage are not really marriage as intended by God. Derivative forms such as “civil marriage” may be “legal” in a broad sense of the term, but since for even the best of reasons God cannot be invited into the marriage *directly* then the legal contract is so much less than it could be.

Sadly in some cases, but quite happily in others! While God can certainly be present in the individual lives of those civilly married: God is not present to the *life and dynamics* of the marriage itself. And why would anyone choose to have a marriage in which God is not a part: marriage is difficult enough without Divine Help! Civil “marriage” at least qualifies essentially as a derivative form because it requires “one-man, one-woman”. If that is ever “redefined” then it will not be marriage at all.

- As in the case of “same-sex ‘marriage’” – there is no such thing as this fantasy arrangement. There is no possibility of “union” at all: this union must be physical if it is to qualify as marriage. Therefore, same sex-“marriage” is not *real*, it is not possible, it is ‘a seriously flawed sociological experiment’ that may hasten the demise of society in our country with rippling effects.’

- It is based on “emotion” rather than reason.
 - It seeks primarily to be a “legal tool” for economic purposes.
 - It makes it impossible, as does civil marriage, to allow God to be a part of the arrangement: God would never go against his own word on marriage as he spoke it in the first place.
 - It creates a completely false sense of “reality” which does not exist – and therefore is a “lie” – and a lie will always catch up with you sooner and later – with emotional, spiritual, psychological and physical negative consequences.
- And so, the Catholic Church very simply wants to, in a very positive pastoral sense, prevent an unnecessary deterioration in society by presenting some “insider facts” – from God, the Author of all Life, all Friendship, Marriage – so that at the very least – everyone involved can make a rational, reasoned conclusion regarding all these things. If your “gut” tells you something is right then it had better be the result of a “faith/reason/heart” dialogue or else it is just indigestion!
 - There is no compromising here at all: it all comes down to the fact that it is never allowable to do something that appears to be right for a wrong reason!
 - The Good News is that within the teachings of the Catholic Church there lies a solution to this issue. The Church is very much pastorally concerned about all of its members – especially those who find themselves in challenging situations within its parameters. Since homosexuality is such a “hot topic” it is important to suspend, as much as possible, feelings which surround the topic: and be ready to breathe in the light of reason, and wisdom and understanding: gifts of God for this very purpose!
 - A “bird’s-eye-view” is found in the above article ON CHASTE BODY AND PURE MINDS (which you have already read)!

Civil grassroots methods of guiding the ambivalence to a happy conclusion can only take place if everyone begins at the starting point of a “look from high above the clouds!” When one is too close to a situation one rarely can appreciate anything at all about the

possibilities of a peaceful solution to a problem! Come up and away and see what can be seen from *God's perspective* - you might be surprised at what you see!