

WHEN THE SAINTS COME MARCHING OUT

- Topic: When the Saints Come Marching Out
 Convener: Vincent A. Pizzuto, University of San Francisco
 Moderator: Paul Crowley, Santa Clara University
 Presenter: Vincent Pizzuto, University of San Francisco
 James Nickoloff, College of the Holy Cross
 Respondent: Gloria Schaab, Barry University

The first paper given by Vincent Pizzuto, entitled, “Grafting What is Holy: Same-Gender Marriage and the Gospel Call to Holiness,” explored the divisive issue of same-gender marriage in the church today through the lens of Paul’s letter to the Romans 14-15. After demonstrating the unfortunate pastoral consequences of current Catholic teaching on homosexuality, as exemplified in *Homosexualitatis Problema*, he went on to suggest that Paul’s pastoral approach to uniting the traditionalist and more liberal factions of the Roman house churches may provide a helpful way forward for the gay and lesbian community in the church today. Much as Paul rejected the traditionalist views of those in the Roman house churches, Pizzuto rejected the contemporary traditionalist view that same-gender relationships *de facto* thwart holiness, and proposed rather that they are quite capable of serving as invitations and catalysts to Christian holiness. Paul’s horticultural metaphor of Rom 11:24, might suggest to traditionalist Catholics that if God can act *para physin* (‘contrary to nature’) in grafting the wild branch of the Gentiles into the cultivated tree of Israel, then the church might emulate this Divine initiative and also find ways to act *para physin* by grafting same-gender relationships (which for millennia have been regarded as ‘unnatural’) into the cultivated tree of traditional marriage. In the meantime, both the ‘strong’ in faith and ‘weak’ in faith stand to benefit from Paul’s pastoral advice to ‘receive one another in love,’ until both can come to a deeper understanding of one another.

Next, James Nickoloff, in his paper “Beyond Narcissism: *Ecclesia Peregrinans* and Catholic Homosexual Couples,” argued that the magisterium’s claims regarding (1) the necessarily self-indulgent, or narcissistic, character of all same-sex relationships (because they are said to lack complementarity and thus block self-transcendence) and (2) ecclesial holiness *tout court* (because the Church as such cannot act as an agent of sin) both suffer from a reductionism which invites correction. Drawing upon the long-standing Catholic inclusivist theological tradition (“both/and”), he proposed, first, that the complexity of life, especially human life, is best understood as a differentiated oneness *as well as* a complementarity of opposites. Thus, all human beings are fundamentally distinct as well as fundamentally alike—at the same time. In turn, because the Church is an *ecclesia peregrinans*, it is best understood as both holy and sinful at the same time, a reality that many Catholics are (re-)discovering today. Finally, he suggested that moving beyond one-sided views of homosexual relationships and ecclesial holiness can open the way to a fruitful renewal of the very concepts of sin and salvation.

Finally, in response to both papers, framed by the insight of Audre Lorde, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house,” Gloria Schaab questioned whether proposals employing present ecclesial models could truly dismantle the structures which deny the holiness of those in same-gender relationships. Calling for reframing ecclesial discourse on theological anthropology, difference, self-transcendence, and embodied holiness, Schaab proposed alternative paradigms such as *imago Dei*, relational ontology, supernatural existential, and “union that differentiates” to transform discourse about holiness in homosexual and heterosexual persons alike. Using such new tools, Schaab contends, an ecclesial community can arise where all are welcome, valued, and sacred in *imitatio Dei*.

Under the moderation of Paul Crowley, a lively exchange among the group participants followed. In addition to questions directed at specific points within the papers presented, many attendants voiced the larger concern that there was an overall impoverishment of a viable Catholic teaching on human sexuality in general. Also discussed was whether same-gender marriages warrant distinctive symbols, traditions, and rituals or if they are as similar to heterosexual marriages as to make such distinctions superfluous.

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