

Fatima Mirror

A weekly publication for the education and edification of parishioners and friends of Our Lady of Fatima Parish of the Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Most Reverend Joseph V. Adamec, D.D. is the diocesan bishop. Father J.D. Zatalava, M.Div. is the pastor. Parishioners worship in the church building named after Saint Leo the Great, 2000 12th Ave. 16601.

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Bishop Jaime Soto's speech at NADGLM conference apparently not what they were expecting.

“It is sinful”

Below is a transcript of Bishop Jaime Soto's keynote speech to the National Association of Diocesan Gay and Lesbian Ministries meeting in Long Beach on Sept. 18 as published on the web site of the Diocese of Sacramento.

When we meditate on the person of Jesus, we often call to mind the many ways that Jesus cared for people. In all the many instances in the gospel when people come to the Lord Jesus with their needs, he fed them, he healed them, he forgave them, and he saved them. This can oftentimes lead us to the conclusion that Jesus always said “yes.” He always gave people what they wanted. He was an agreeable person.

That is not always the case in the gospel. A couple of weeks ago, we heard in Sunday's gospel the story of a difficult encounter between Jesus and Simon Peter. In the sixteenth

chapter of Matthew chosen for the Twenty-second Sunday of the Year, Jesus begins to lay out for his disciples the pending passion and death that awaits him in Jerusalem. Simon Peter is a little put off by the subject of Jesus' conversation concerning the suffering that awaits him. He tries to persuade the Lord that this is not a good idea for him or for his followers. What Jesus described was not the cruise for which Simon Peter had signed up. When Simon Peter first responded to the Lord's invitation to come follow him, this was not on the itinerary.

Jesus says “no” to his friend, Simon Peter, in no uncertain terms, “You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do.” The words of Jesus to Peter must have shocked Peter. This is not the agreeable guy he had come to know and follow. He probably felt like prophet Jeremiah who in the first reading that same Sunday said quite bluntly, “You duped me, O LORD, and I let myself be duped.”

Jesus says “no” to Peter's request so that he can say “yes” to Peter and to us with his sacrifice on the cross. Jesus does not give in to the expectations of Peter or the expectations of others. He has firmly planted in his heart the expectations and desires of his Father in heaven. He says “no” to Peter and challenges Peter to take up a greater “yes,” to take up his cross and follow him.

Paul had the same thing in mind when in the Letter to the Romans he says, “Do not conform yourselves to this age.” Paul reminds us that we are not to conform ourselves to the fads and fancies of our society. We are to conform ourselves to Christ.

We can easily give in to the temptation to go along in order to get along. We can easily be duped by the popular ideas and trends that surround us. “Everybody does it” can become reason enough to think it or do it ourselves. Like

Peter we can think that what Jesus teaches us is too unrealistic, too unreasonable. Like Peter we can convince ourselves that we know better than the Lord. We may even try to negotiate with Jesus, like Peter does, for easier terms.

We see this especially in the area of sexuality. So much of what we see and hear every day can lead us to a distorted sense of our sexuality. Sexuality has been reduced to a matter of personal preference and personal pleasure without responsibility and with little respect for others. We can lose sight of the profound dignity of the human person who shares in God's love and creative work through the chaste expression of one's sexuality proper to one's calling in life.



We are surrounded by a “contraceptive culture” that has reduced the procreative act to simple recreation absolved of any responsibility. **The deceptive language of “pro-choice” ignores the consequences of the choice for abortion that does violence to the most innocent and leaves traumatic scars on many young women.**

What is a particular concern and alarm for us in California as well as others across the country is the bold judicial challenge to the longstanding cultural and moral understanding of marriage as a sacred covenant between a woman and a man.

Our own efforts to restore common sense through the ballot initiative, Proposition 8, are portrayed as bigoted and out-of-touch. The irony is that what we propose is most in touch with the nature of families and what is good for the welfare of all.

That we find ourselves at this time, reasserting the basic moral and reasonable understanding of marriage, means that much has changed in the popular perceptions of sexuality and common notions about marriage. While we work to pass Proposition 8 this coming November, it is important to remember why we do this. Like Jesus, in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew that I cited, we are saying a strong “no” to the California courts and to many who support the court's wrong-headed decision. This “no” is not rooted in bigotry or bias. It is firmly rooted in a greater “yes” to a truer, more authentic appreciation of love's calling and love's design for the human heart.

The nature of love has been distorted. Many popular notions have deviated from its true destiny. Love for many has come to mean having sex. If you cannot have sex than you cannot love. This is the message. Even more destructive is the prevailing notion that sex is not an expression of love. Sex is love. This *reductio ad absurdum* deprives sexuality of its true meaning and robs the human person of the possibility of ever knowing real love.

IT IS SINFUL

Sexual intercourse is a beautiful expression of love, but this is so when intercourse is understood as a unique expression intended to share in the creative, faithful love of God. As the Holy Father, Pope Benedict, elaborated in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, "Marriage based on exclusive and definitive love" – *between a man and woman* – "becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa. God's way of loving becomes the measure of human love." (DCE, n. 11) Sexual intercourse within the context of the marriage covenant becomes a beautiful icon – a sacrament – of God's creative, unifying love. When sexual intercourse is taken out of this iconic, sacramental context of the complementary, procreative covenant between a man and a woman it becomes impoverished and it demeans the human person.

Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman in the covenant of Marriage is one expression of love to which the human person can aspire, but we are all called to love. It is part of our human nature to love. We all have a desire to love, but this love can deviate from its true calling when it exalts only in the pleasure of the body. Pope Benedict said in the same encyclical, "The contemporary way of exalting the body is deceptive. Eros, reduced to pure 'sex,' has become a commodity, a mere 'thing' to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity. This is hardly man's great 'yes' to the body. On the contrary, he now considers his body and his sexuality as the purely material part of himself, to be used and exploited at will." (DCE, n. 5) This is not our true calling. The human desire to love must lead us to the divine. Looking again to the Holy Father's encyclical, he says, "True, eros – *human desire* – tends to rise 'in ecstasy' towards the Divine, to lead us beyond ourselves; yet for this very reason it calls for a path of ascent, renunciation, purification and healing." (DCE, n. 5)

This path is the path of chastity. This is very true in marriage. It is also true in all of human life because it is the nature of all authentic love. We are all called to love. We are all called to be loved. This can only happen when we choose to love in the manner that God has called us to live. Love leads us to ecstasy, not as a moment of intoxication but rather as a journey, "an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God: 'Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it' (Lk 17:33)." (DCE n. 6)

Sexuality, then, as part of our human nature only dignifies and liberates us when we begin to love in harmony with God's love and God's wisdom for us. Chastity as a virtue is the path that brings us to that harmony with God's wisdom and love. Chastity moves us beyond one's desire to what God wills for each one of us. Chastity is love's journey on the path of "ascent, renunciation, purification and healing." Chastity is the understanding that it is not all about me or about us. We act always under God's gaze. Desire tempered and tested by "renunciation, purification, and healing" can lead us to God's design.

This is true for all of us. It is also true for men and women who are homosexual. We are called to live and love in a manner that brings us into respectful, chaste relationships with one another and an intimate relationship with God. We should be an instrument of God's love for one another. Let me be clear here. Sexual intercourse, outside of the marriage covenant between a man and a woman, can be alluring and intoxicating but it will not lead to that liberating journey of true self-discovery and an authentic discovery of God. For that reason, it is sinful. Sexual relations between people of the same sex can be alluring for homosexuals but it deviates from the true meaning of the act and distracts them from the true nature of love to which God has called us all. For this reason, it is sinful.

Married love is a beautiful, heroic expression of faithful, life-giving, life-creating love. It should not be accommodated and manipulated for those who would believe that they can and have a right to mimic its unique expression.

IT IS SINFUL

Marriage is also not the sole domain of love as some of the politics would seem to imply. Love is lived and celebrated in so many ways that can lead to a wholesome, earnest, and religious life: the deep and chaste love of committed friends, the untiring love of committed religious and clergy, the profound and charitable bonds among the members of a Christian community, enduring, forgiving, and supportive love among family members. Should we dismiss or demean the human and spiritual significance of these lives given in love?

This is a hard message today. It is still the right message. It will unsettle and disturb many of our brothers and sisters, just as Peter was unsettled and put off by the stern rebuke of his master and good friend, the Lord Jesus. If the story of Peter's relationship with Jesus had begun and ended there, it would have been a sad tale indeed, but that is not the whole story then nor is it the whole story now. Jesus met Simon Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He said with great love and fondness, "Come, follow me." Peter would not only continue to follow the Lord Jesus to Jerusalem despite his many failings and foibles, he would eventually choose to love as Jesus loved him. He would die a martyr's death in Rome, giving himself completely for the one who loved him so dearly.

The teaching of the Church regarding the sacred dignity of human sexuality is not a rebuke but an invitation to love as God loves us. The Church's firm support of Proposition 8 is not a rebuke against homosexuals but a heartfelt affirmation of the nature of the marriage covenant between a man and a woman. We hope and pray that all people, including our brothers and sisters who are homosexuals, will see the reasonableness of our position and the sincerity of our love for them.

For that reason, we should let the words of St. Paul haunt us and unsettle us: "Do not conform yourself to this age." In so many ways we can allow ourselves to be duped, fooled, by the fads and trends of this age. It is far better that we allow ourselves to be drawn into the ways and the manners of Jesus. The Lord Jesus challenges us as he challenged his friend, Simon Peter, to not conform to what is fashionable and convenient. He has so much more to offer us. Do not think as others do. Let us think as God does. He shows us the way, the truth, and the life.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says this about homosexuality

2357 Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity,¹⁴¹ tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."¹⁴² They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

2358 The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

Life is Precious
Link-up with Life Chain
Sun. Oct 5, 2008



27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 4-5, 2008

MONEY MATTERS 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (September 28)

252 people Celebrated Liturgy at O.L.F. contributing \$1,715.55 of which \$645.90 accounted for "loose" cash.
Envelopes In Circulation 239 # Used 115 # Unused 124

Our Lady of Fatima

Wednesday, October 8, 2008

Drive by Soup Sale

Home Made Chicken Noodle

\$5.00 per Quart

We provide the container

**Order by Signing Clipboards in the pews or Phoning the Rectory
(814) 942-0371**

No Orders Taken After Monday 10/6/08 at Noon

Pickup times: 11:00-1:00pm or 4:00-6:00 pm

OUR LADY OF FATIMA ROSARY RALLY on OCT. 11, 2PM at HERITAGE PLAZA, 11 AVE., ALTOONA

Join the 2nd annual Altoona Public Square Rosary Rally with 2000 other cities in the U.S. and now growing to cities around the world.

Currently, the U.S. is suffering from sins of abortion, homosexuality, impure fashions and immoral laws. Our Lady at Fatima said: "I have come to warn the faithful to amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins; and that people must pray the Rosary to obtain peace for the world." Bring chairs (anf.org) Even though this isn't a Parish sponsored function, the pastor encourages parishioners' participation.

St. Vincent DePaul Thrift Shop

St. Vincent DePaul Thrift Shop, (2223 8th Avenue, Altoona) will be holding their annual "Coat Giveaway" on Saturday, Oct. 4th & Saturday, Oct. 18th from 9:00 am thru 2:00 pm Everyone is welcome! Also visit our Holiday Gift Shop upstairs in the warehouse. Volunteers are always needed and welcomed!

MASS INTENTIONS FOR October 6 – 12, 2008

Monday	10/6	08:00 AM	Patrick Kenney, 9/24 Anv., Wife Theresa	<i>Bl. Marie-Rose Durocher, virgin</i>
Tuesday	10/7	08:00 AM	Theresa M. Bruno, Gabby and Family	<i>Our Lady of the Rosary</i>
Wednesday	10/8	08:00 AM	Pat Dennis, Kate Burr and Family	<i>Weekday</i>
Thursday	10/9	08:00 AM	Debra Shuma, Ron Reading	<i>Denis, BP., mar., & companions</i>
Friday	10/10	08:00 AM	Walter Bieniek, Mrs. Stella Gates & Fam.	<i>Weekday</i>
Saturday	10/11	04:30 PM	Newly Ordained Priest Fr. Onyeocha	<i>28th Sunday in Ordinary Time</i>
Sunday	10/12	09:00 AM	Hattie R. Zaczek, 22nd Anv., Children	<i>28th Sunday in Ordinary Time</i>
Sunday	10/12	11:00 AM	Liv/Dec Members of Our Lady of Fatima	<i>28th Sunday in Ordinary Time</i>