

A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

The following is my response to questions raised about my homily last weekend.

The focus of the homily is for Christians to have courage in the face of hostility and disparagement from a society that proclaims that Christian beliefs and virtues are outmoded, false, and harmful in today's world. This hostility often takes the form of requiring Christians to publicly state their support for positions or policies that they disagree with. Examples of this would include public colleges and universities requiring current or prospective employees to sign statements indicating their agreement with policies that violate their conscience or risk not being hired or being fired from their employment; or requiring employees at work to wear clothing or pins to indicate support for organizations that support practices that are contrary to Christian teaching; or having their employer publicly honor organizations that openly mock the Catholic faith and expecting their employees to support this position or risk termination of their employment. There are many Christians in today's society that no longer believe that they can speak openly about their own beliefs for fear of reprisal. Such persons often believe themselves to be alone and in being alone begin to think that they should give up their beliefs and give in to society so that they no longer feel alone.

So often these policies and positions take the form of pseudo-scientific sounding statements that are repeated as "facts," but have not been substantiated or proven in a scientific manner. The example I choose to highlight in my homily is the frequently heard hypothesis that there are many different genders beyond male and female. The number and description of these various genders vary tremendously from publication to publication. As if, as is the case, the number and description of these genders comes not from any rigorous scientific study - much less many repeated and verified studies - but rather from the personal opinions of various individuals and influencers. It is this lack of any consistency or verifiability that I mocked in my homily, not any person or persons. Almost any other statement on a non-hot button topic in our society that showed a similar lack of consistency or verifiability would be rejected as unsubstantiated out of hand. Yet, on this topic of the number of genders people who disagree with the socially popular position find themselves forced to silence themselves or suffer serious consequences.

Nothing in my homily is meant as an attack upon those persons who believe themselves to be misgendered or having some alternative gender (I do make an exception from this statement for those persons who deliberately lie about their "gender identity" in order to gain access to people in private locations for the purposes of physical assault or humiliation). I most certainly do not wish them harm and will condemn anyone who unjustly causes them harm. Instead, these men and women, have my

sympathy and my pity. In many cases their real psychological sufferings have been diagnosed – either by professionals or by seemingly knowledgeable persons met online – with the popular diagnosis of the moment, that is to say, having a gender different from one’s actual human form. The treatment that these people receive often does little to address their actual issues; which often leads them to further and more invasive treatments that cause permanent harm. The idea that a proper treatment for physically healthy, but sexually and mentally immature teenagers who are suffering from psychological issues is surgical removal of the primary and secondary sexual organs is quite simply obscene.

I have no doubt that there are some people who will say that my lack of approval for people who believe themselves to be members of some alternative gender is itself harmful. To these people I can make no defense that they will accept. They will not accept anything other than my public approval for their personal beliefs; which I cannot in good conscience give to them. Yet, it is this public approval that is demanded of not only me, but of many other people. And not only on this particular topic, but of many other topics. It has been pointed out to me that Pope Francis has publicly reached out to persons who believe themselves to be transgendered. I am glad that the Holy Father has done this. The Church should maintain lines of communication with all human beings. There is nothing gained and much to be lost should the Church refuse to reach out to people who believe themselves to be transgendered. However, that outreach cannot be predicated on agreeing that persons who believe themselves to be transgendered (and those persons who are pushing them in that direction) are doing the right or moral thing. This must be adhered to even if it causes hardship for the Church. The success of the Church is not measured in the number of people attending church services, but in the Church’s fidelity to the teaching of Jesus Christ as handed down to us through the Holy Scriptures and the Apostles.

It is to encourage the members of the Church to be stout-hearted and courageous in their faith and in their own conscience that I gave this homily. As I wrote earlier, Christians today feel pressured to abandon their beliefs in order to fit into society, or to keep their employment, or to be considered “up-to-date” with current popular thinking. The homily is meant to recall for us living today that our ancestors in faith also felt such pressure and still persevered in their faith. We can do the same.

Yours in Christ,

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Pastor