

Inconsistent view of homosexuality misleads students

On Tuesday, the people of California voted on Proposition 22, which proposes that, "only marriage between a man and a woman is recognized in California."

A generation ago, and for the past two millennia, the truth of that proposition would have been regarded as self-evident. Today it is doubted because of a cultural redefinition of the nature of homosexual acts, of the homosexual inclination and consequently of marriage and the family.

More to the point, one may fairly question whether the California proposition would be approved by a majority at Notre Dame. This is so because for several years, the administration has permeated the campus with a view of the subject that is incoherent and misleading.

Let's review some basics. Homosexual acts are intrinsically wrong. As the Letter on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons, issued with the approval of John Paul II in 1986, states: "It is only in the marital relationship that the use of the sexual faculty can be morally good. To choose someone of the same sex for one's sexual activity is to annul the rich symbolism and meaning, not to mention the goals, of the creator's sexual design." The



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homosexual inclination is not a sin. However, as the 1986 letter states, "Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil, and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."

The Catechism sums it up: "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." (No. 2358.)

Notre Dame commendably insists that persons of homosexual inclination are entitled to respect and acceptance as members of the University community. The administration also says that homosexual acts are prohibited by "official Church teaching," but it refuses to affirm that the inclination toward those acts is disordered. That makes no sense, and it misleads the students. If, as the Catechism states, "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered," (No. 2357), how could the inclina-

tion toward those acts be anything but disordered? If the inclination is not disordered, why may it not be acted upon?

Since the administration does not recognize the inclination as disordered, it infers that the prohibition of homosexual acts is an arbitrary edict of an insensitive Church. In truth, homosexual acts, and the inclination to them, are "intrinsically disordered," not because of "official Church teaching," but because they are contrary to nature and the law of God.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, last May, forbade Sister Jeannine Gramick and Father Robert Nugent to engage in homosexual ministries because their positions on "the intrinsic evil of homosexual acts and the objective disorder of the homosexual inclination are doctrinally unacceptable." Sister Jeannine's speech at Notre Dame last week was co-sponsored by the Counseling Center. That makes you wonder what kind of counseling they do over there.

The administration misleads students into regarding the teaching of the Church as an arbitrary restriction on a well-ordered inclination. And it discourages students from using potentially helpful resources. The Student Union Board stated last term to the Trustees: "[W]e ask that Campus Ministry invite Courage to campus. This organization was founded by Catholic priests to minister to the homosexual community. Courage is truly pastoral: It presents participants with the teachings of the Catholic Church while ministering to them through group support and loving care, bringing them into the Catholic community."

Don't hold your breath waiting for our leaders to allow Courage on campus. When the Maritain Center sponsored a series of speakers in the fall of 1997, including Father John Harvey, the founder of Courage, Campus Ministry and the Counseling Center took Observer ads to discourage attendance. The efforts of Courage and similar groups are politically incorrect.

The administration's orthodoxy of political correctness prevails over the pastoral needs of students. "[D]eparture from the Church's teaching or silence about it, in an effort to provide pastoral care," says the 1986 Letter, "is neither caring nor pastoral. Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral. The neglect of the Church's position prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve."

And it leads to distorted ideas on the nature of the human person, marriage and the family. One may fairly wonder how the folks at Campus Ministry and the Counseling Center would have voted on Proposition 22.

Professor Rice is on the Law School faculty. His column appears every other Tuesday. The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of The Observer.