

Against the Current

A column for teens and young adults

by Fr. Bohdan Hladio

Monogamous, Heterosexual, Blessed, and Committed

So, apparently everyone *isn't* entitled to an opinion.

Dan Cathy, the owner of the “Chick-fil-A” fast food restaurant chain, was interviewed last month for a Baptist Church newspaper and asked about his thoughts regarding marriage. He responded that he believed in a traditional, biblical definition of marriage as a union between one man and one woman, monogamous, blessed, and sexually exclusive, for life.

When the interview was published a firestorm erupted. Many people and organizations in the militant Lesbian/Gay/Bi-sexual/Transsexual (LGBT) community, as well as other so-called “progressives” went on the attack, accusing him of “homophobia”, intolerance, bigotry, hatemongering, etc.

As usually happens, this reaction begat an equal and opposite reaction. A “Chick-fil-A day” was organized, with supporters being encouraged to eat at the restaurant on a pre-determined day. Media reports indicated that the response was overwhelming, with lines stretching around the block in some places, and people who normally don't frequent the chain eating there just to show their solidarity.

A few days later the militant LGBT constituency (these are the very “in your face” pro-homosexuality people who are generally pretty aggressive and disrespectful towards anyone who doesn't share their views) organized a “kiss-in” where same-sex couples had their picture taken outside of Chick-fil-A restaurants holding hands, kissing, hugging, etc. as a protest against the comments made by the owner regarding marriage. It was an interesting example of people putting money in the coffers of their opponent, as the franchise did a brisk business on this day as well!

What's really interesting about this whole affair is the fact that the owner said nothing about or against lesbians or gays. He only offered his opinion as to what constituted marriage. Certain people in the LGBT community as well as their sympathizers, though, turned his remarks into an attack against them.

The reaction a person or group makes to a particular stimulus usually tells us much more about the person or group than it does about the stimulus. In the given instance, the reaction seems to indicate that the militant LGBT constituency and their sympathizers wish to prevent anyone from publicly expressing an opinion about marriage which differs from their own, and are prepared to go to great lengths to impose their will on others.

The USA claims to be a free country, where citizens enjoy the right to free speech and are entitled to voice reasonable opinions in a respectful manner. What we see in this episode, as well as in many similar events, is that certain opinions can apparently no longer be tolerated. And the intolerance is coming from people - in this case the militant LGBT lobby - who have spent decades demanding tolerance for themselves!

We're not talking about someone who is actively attacking homosexuals. As it says on the company's web-site, "The Chick-fil-A culture and service tradition in our Restaurants is to treat every person with honor, dignity and respect-regardless of their belief, race, creed, sexual orientation or gender". Not one example of the Chick-fil-A chain discriminating against same sex couples or individuals either as customers or as employees has been reported in the press. We're talking about a man voicing his opinion in a Church newspaper, an opinion which, even 20 years ago, would have been a total non-issue.

Dan Cathy is a devout Baptist. His father, who started the chain, was too. As a matter of Christian principle he refuses to open his restaurants on Sunday. Now this is a big chain, with over 1,600 franchises. The decision not to open on Sunday costs him millions of dollars. Apparently Mr. Cathy, in the eyes of some people, is free to open and close his stores in

accordance with his Christian principles, but isn't free to publicly speak about these principles (in a Christian periodical, no less!) without being condemned and vilified.

Such episodes of persecution directed at people and institutions which hold traditional moral teachings are becoming more and more common. In 2005 a judge in the state of Massachusetts ruled that adoption agencies and foster parents must be "affirming" in regards to homosexuality and same sex relationships. Not only was it forbidden to say anything bad about homosexuality or same sex relationships, not only was it unacceptable to simply say nothing - if you wanted to be registered to place children for adoption or to be a foster-parent in the state of Massachusetts you or your agency had to sign a paper promising that you would positively affirm the goodness of such relationships.

As a result of this law, Catholic Charities of Boston had a choice - deny the teachings of the Catholic Church, or close their adoption agency. So they closed. This was a direct result of the activity of the militant "gay lobby" and an "activist judge", i.e., a judge - usually appointed, not elected - who takes it upon him/herself to interpret a law in a way it was never interpreted before. Foster parents, whether religious or non-religious (and there are people who disagree with the "homosexual lifestyle" for non-religious reasons) are also forbidden to take in foster children if they're not "affirming".

These examples clearly show how the demand for tolerance leads to intolerance. It usually works like this: tolerance is demanded for an idea, a religious sect, a particular type of conduct, whatever. The majority might think it's bad, weird, ill-advised or nonsense, but in a democratic, pluralistic society you can't tell anyone else what to do, can you? So the conduct or idea or sect is "tolerated" - we might not like it, we might say we don't like it, but we can't stop it. The next step is acceptance. You must accept what I do. You still don't agree with it, but at this point it's "politically incorrect" to speak out against it, and those who do are called "intolerant", "fundamentalists", "old-fashioned", "bigots", etc. The final step is affirmation. You must actively affirm that whatever it is I do or say is good in and of itself, and if you don't "get with the program" you are marginalized, penalized, or demonized - usually all of the above.

Like Dan Cathy, many others in the USA and Canada have been demonized and attacked because of their faith and their morals. It's important to emphasize that when we speak out in support of Christian marriage we are not in any way, shape, or form promoting hate, supporting bigotry, or talking about anything other than the truth as we understand it. The same Bible which contains teachings about marriage and sexuality teaches us that we must treat every other human being with love and respect, that we should not persecute other people, that we must love our enemies, that we should be willing to sacrifice our own lives for those who hate and despise us (like Jesus did), and that we can never do evil so that good might result. Though we might disagree with people as to what constitutes acceptable moral behavior, as Christians we believe that acts of violence, bullying, or disrespect towards those with same-sex attraction (or anyone else!) are always unacceptable and sinful.

During my short lifetime I've witnessed a gigantic paradigm shift. In my younger days people promoting homosexual behavior (same-sex marriage wasn't even on the map!) were often shunned, attacked, bullied, and demonized. The reaction to Dan Cathy's statement shows us that today, in a multicultural, pluralistic, supposedly "tolerant" society people espousing traditional moral teachings are the ones being shunned, attacked, bullied, and demonized.

Because apparently it's hateful to use adjectives like monogamous, heterosexual, blessed, and committed to describe marriage.

God help us!