

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER



SAME-SEX PARENTING

PREPARED BY THE ETHICISTS OF THE NCBC
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“Heterologous fertilization . . . is contrary to the covenant of marriage, the unity of the spouses, and the dignity proper to parents and the child. . . . Because of the dignity of the child and of marriage, and because of the uniqueness of the mother-child relationship, participation in contracts or arrangements for surrogate motherhood is not permitted.”—USCCB, *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, 5th ed. (2009), n. 40 and 42.

❖ SUMMARY ❖

- Marriage is the privileged context that safeguards the dignity and identity of children in their origin and development. Couples of the same sex are incapable of the direct, mutual, and exclusive acts of marital self-giving love that are open to generating new human persons. This faculty is necessary for a marriage. • Same-sex couples who want children turn to adoption or artificial fertilization. The former exposes children to a harmful vision of human sexuality and consequent psychological difficulties, and the latter reduces the child to a product of third-party contrivance understood as a “right” rather than a gift. • The concept of same-sex marriage and parenting undermines the complementarity of male and female: distinct yet equal in dignity, different yet equally essential to the structure of the family, reflecting the image of the Trinitarian God who is himself a community of distinct but equal persons.

Same-Sex “Marriage”

- Legal recognition of unions between homosexual persons undermines the common good of society by distorting the structure of the family, which is the basic unit of society. If the family is unstable, so is the society. • The fundamental structure and purpose of marriage can be found in the natural moral law and must be acknowledged by civil law. Marriage is not an exclusively “religious” concept or right with no civil bearing. • Legal recognition of same-sex marriage would be based on the understanding of marriage as only the fulfillment of a mutual desire for companionship, without any implied or expected responsibilities for child-rearing. Such “companionship” could take many forms, opening the door to polygamy, incest, pederasty, and other forms of deviance.

Same-Sex Parenting

- Studies have long demonstrated the strength and stability of the traditional family structure, which is grounded in marriage between one man and one woman. Children in traditional families have statistically significant advantages in concrete adult outcomes (such as salaries, healthy habits, and education levels) when compared to children raised in alternative family structures (such as those involving divorce, single motherhood, or multiple partnerships). Socioeconomic factors aside, children in traditional families also have greater emotional, psychological, and relational stability. • A recent study by Mark Regnerus confirms the concrete advantages of the traditional family structure over alternative structures, specifically those with same-sex parents (*Social Science Research* 41.4 [July 2012]: 752–770). • A recent study by Loren Marks debunks studies with severe methodological flaws that have been used to support the claims that persons with homosexual inclinations are just as well-adjusted as heterosexual persons and that same-sex parenting is just as effective as traditional heterosexual parenting (*Social Science Research* 41.4 [July 2012]: 735–751).

Same-Sex Adoption and Catholic Institutions

- Catholic institutions may not allow same-sex couples to adopt children. Same-sex adoption puts the desires of adults over the needs of the children and creates scandal with regard to the Church’s teaching on marriage and family.

❖ FAQ ❖

Question 1. Currently, same-sex couples are denied legal recognition, so their relationships are less stable than those of heterosexual couples, and stability is a key predictor of good outcomes. Same-sex couples in legally recognized relationships who want to raise children would be more affluent, stable, and serious about a long-term relationship than those without legal recognition, and could therefore provide the same benefits that opposite-sex married couples provide: good schools, a stable place of residence, emotional stability and encouragement, medical insurance coverage, regular supervision, healthy eating habits, and so forth. So in comparable socioeconomic conditions, why would children raised by same-sex couples be at a disadvantage compared with those raised in traditional families?

Reply: There are no study data available on parenting outcomes for the same-sex couples in legally recognized relationships, since same-sex unions have been legalized only recently in just a few states. Studies that are available indicate that same-sex relationships, especially those between men, do not tend to last very long. Given the legality of no-fault divorce, this does not bode well for stability even if legal recognition is granted. More important, socioeconomic indicators alone cannot predict or account for psychological consequences and identity issues. It may be possible for a person to achieve great socioeconomic success despite unresolved personal identity issues and serious emotional and affective imbalances. Indeed, in an essay published in the wake of the Regnerus study, Oscar Robert Lopez, a successful intellectual raised by lesbian mothers, expressed his painful difficulty with understanding and relating to both genders and himself well into adulthood. The good of the whole person goes deeper than material success.

Question 2. If God has created persons with homosexual inclinations, and God does only good, then how can it be wrong to act on those inclinations?

Reply: Creation is fallen because of original sin, which is not God’s doing, and all persons experience inclinations and desires of various sorts that would cause harm to themselves or to others if acted upon. Such inclinations and desires are temptations. The actions are objectively wrong and the inclinations that drive us to them are disordered. Our lives involve a constant effort to preserve mastery over ourselves and to properly order our passions so that we can exemplify God’s love in all we do, and His grace can aid us in this effort.

Question 3. Are persons with same-sex attractions “born that way”?

Reply: This is a scientific question, not a moral one. Regardless of the origin of the inclination, human persons are free to choose how to act in response to the passions they experience. However, the strength and depth of an inclination may affect the degree of culpability for individual immoral acts. There is no scientific evidence to date for a “gay gene” that deterministically sets a person’s sexual orientation. The vast majority of evidence points to the importance of more malleable factors such as temperament (which is only partly genetic in origin and is certainly not limited to a specific gene), relationships with parents, hormone exposure, birth order, peer influences, experiences such as sexual abuse, and so forth. Many persons with same-sex attractions have successfully “reoriented” through counseling and therapy.

❖ RESOURCES ❖

Robert Oscar Lopez, “Growing Up with Two Moms: The Untold Children’s View,” *Public Discourse*, August 6, 2012, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2012/08/6065/>. Reproduced by permission.

Dale O’Leary, “Challenging the No-Difference Myth,” *Ethics & Medics* 37.10 (October 2012): 3–4. Reproduced by permission.