



Urbi et Orbi

TO THE CITY AND THE WORLD: Let it be known that the natural order of things is under attack. The distinctions between men and women given to us by the Creator Spirit and widely reported in *The Book of Genesis*, are under assault by a deadly combination of new-fangled theories, butch dykes and nancy boys. It is rumoured that in one or two places around the world even Roman Catholic priests, bishops, and astonishingly, a cardinal or two, have been adding to the confusion by saying that the church shouldn't be quite so beastly to homosexuals. According to these liberal clerics the poor buggers can't help being bent – so the church should avoid adding divine disapproval to their problems. Sensitive Roman Catholics should recognise the love and goodness, which is often shown by these queers in their queer doings. Love, an essential part of the Christian *Credo*, must be reconciled, they say, with the natural reality of human homosexuality.

The Pope, who got wind of these queer goings on some months ago, decided last Monday, in his pre-Christmas message to the Curia, to remind wayward liberal clerics that God doesn't like homosexuality, never has, and never will. In the arcane language of the Vatican's internal bulletins God's Rottweiler spelled out, again, the eternal truth, that homosexuality is not part of God's plan. On the contrary homosexuality is so dangerous that it might actually upset the natural

order of things, leading to the end of man, the rain forest, and the world.

Seated on high in the magnificent Papal Audience Hall, the Sala Clementina, under a ceiling bearing an image of the charitable *Mother in Glory* spraying those beneath with the milk of human kindness from her full naked breasts, the Holy Father decided to talk turkey to their Eminences, Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and Presbyterate, the ordinary priests, and the lowly monks and nuns, crowded around the foot of his golden throne. He told them that the Catholic Church is no place for liberals. The wayward have got to return to “faith in the Creator” and hold fast to the eternal truths enunciated long ago by the “great Scholastic theologians”; they must stoutly defend “the language of creation”, and resolutely resist its “devaluation” which can only lead “to the self-destruction of man and therefore to the destruction of the work of God.” Gender bending is out. We must return, the Pope infallibly insists, to the world of Doris Day in which a woman’s touch could always be relied upon to bring a man around to doing what comes naturally.

In all this carry on you might think that the Old Boy is a bit out of touch. He certainly hasn’t been watching *High School Musical, 1, 2, or 3*. These guys and gals have not even heard of racial tension, never mind queer theory. It is true that one of the basketball guys cooks and one of the science girls break dances – “we are all different, but different in a good way” they sing – but by and large, the language of creation seems to be safe with the kids at East High. The boys want the girls and the girls want the boys and, Ohmigosh, these eager kids have certainly never toyed with gender confusion. It is true that in his *Senior Year* basketball captain, Troy Bolton, is torn between a sports scholarship to the “U of A” and studying music at Juilliard – sports versus music – the Pope might have a point. Perhaps this conflict is a metaphor for gender bending healthy jocks into effete arty types? If this is so the danger is well camouflaged beneath Troy’s

wholesome enthusiasm for his muse, the lovely Gabriella Mantez.

Indeed, if my Christmas movie viewing is anything to go by, the Pope need not be so paranoid; the Doris Day view of the world is pretty much intact. It is true that the girls are a bit more resourceful and the boys are a bit more emotionally articulate than they were in *Oklahoma* or in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, but by and large, boy meets girl, they fall in love, have kids, and it all starts all over again, on and on, cycling through the Creation just as God intended. This appears to apply equally to dappled Dalmatians, tap-dancing penguins, and those in search of Nemo. Some might say that this is simply Disney make-believe, Hollywood schmaltz, in which marvellous American optimism and *can do* enthusiasm is married to the wholesome natural impulses which boys have for girls. But the truth is, off screen, in *the real world*, in fact everywhere one looks, the girls are all glitterery in shapely pinks and the boys are nonchalantly anti-fitted and baggy.

Plainly, what is actually under attack is not the fact that most people are unassailably heterosexual, but the hypocrisy and intolerance of the Pope and his fellow celibates. There they sit in their gilded rooms on their gilded furniture, the Roman Curia – a “family” with a “father” at the head of their “mother” the church, “married” to Christ, obsessing about the bizarre Holy Family in which the father in the form of The Holy Ghost inseminates the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, in order to bring forth a Son who is simultaneously the Father, and the Holy Ghost who inseminated Him. All these sacred mysteries have made these old men jealous guardians of the metaphor. Consequently, lesbians must not found “families”, gay men must not get “married”, gay liberationists must not talk of “brothers” and “sisters” these usages are reserved exclusively for *Il Papa* and his pals.

This is what is under attack. The liberal Catholics much to the dismay of the Holy Father have picked up on the fact that clear majorities in one country after

another are beginning to feel that oppressing homosexuals is not only not very nice, but that it is not necessary. They are getting fed up with a Pope and a church that keeps saying no to contraception, no to abortion, no to this, that and the other. Above all, they can't see why the Pope should be allowed to keep all the metaphors to himself. They think that perhaps he could afford to share them around a bit. Be a bit more inclusive. Let girls say the mass, break the bread, pour the wine, let the priests marry, loosen up a bit. Get over all that dark paranoia. Live a little.

The problem is, and Benedict XVI knows this only too well, that although the Roman Catholic Church is bound by a closely woven winding sheet, if you pull just one thread of its certainties, the whole shroud will unravel. This would leave the paranoid old men of the Curia defenceless in a world of myriad indeterminations, a world in which they, unlike the rest of humanity, would be unable to tell the difference between right and wrong. What the Holy Father says is infallibly true; the Roman Catholic Church cannot reform itself because reform would put an end, both to Church, and to its eternal truths.