

BETWEEN ADAM AND STEVE: AN AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

Rev Stan chu ilo

When I was growing up in my little village in Eastern Nigeria, one thing mattered so much to me: my family. I had a father and a mother. I had my brothers and sisters and a network of other relationships, which revolved around my family. I got a balanced view of the female and male worlds through the complimentary roles of my mother and father. They thus made me to see the world as it is and to be able to make the difference. For an African the family is the most important social institution. It is the mirror through which one saw the world. The folklores and proverbs containing the collective wisdom of the tribe were preserved in the family traditions and stories and communicated to the children. How can I forget the loving care of my mother complimented by my father's tender discipline? As a child, I learnt the ethos of the clan from my family and witnessed the triumph of time-tested tribal values over any kind of moral relativism, in the safe confines of my family.

Among Africans, it is a tragedy not to have a mum or a dad. As a result of this, orphans and single parent kids are often brought up collectively to make up for the loss through death or divorce of one or both of the parents. No man or woman has honor in Africa unless he or she has a family. For the African woman, marriage to a man is the crown of womanhood and childbirth is a confirmation of the blessing of God to the call of every woman to motherhood. My people believe that God would do two things if he wanted to destroy the world: destroy families and close the womb of women. We Africans believe also that the family must be preserved and protected. Indeed, the greatest gift children receive in the African milieu is proper upbringing along the path of moral living and respect for the values that hold society together.

As an African living in Canada, I am surprised by the judgment of the Ontario Court of Appeal upgrading same-sex relationship to the level of marriage. I really wonder how I will be able to explain this to the children I meet in some of our elementary schools in Peterborough. This is obviously one issue that would have very adverse

consequences on the moral, social and cultural life of the Canadian nation. I do respect and love people who are not straight. They are not abnormal people and they demand the same measure of dignity and equal treatment like everyone else. However, marriage is one institution that you cannot confer on people, who are incapable of producing its effects. No person ever got punished because he or she was unmarried. Marriage is an institution, which has a rich symbolism in the persons entering into it and the children that result from it. The purpose of marriage goes beyond self-indulgence and personal gratification, to procreation, education of children and promotion of the values of the human race.

Unfortunately, the top thin layer in the gay-movement are so articulate and influential at the legislative, judicial and political circles that they wish to change family life and thus threaten the future of our children. **Are they to cow most people in Canada who think otherwise into failing to defend the traditional family?** Laws are operable to the extent that they conform to natural law, divine positive law, and social acceptability and promote the collective good of a people. The social approval of same-sex relations as equivalent to or an alternative to heterosexual marriage is one of the goals of the homosexual movements. However, this movement should not be confused as representative of the position of most morally sensitive homosexuals for the simple reason that they are so visible and aggressive. Most homosexual people are recognizing the value of chaste living and resisting the impulse to homogenital gratification. The heterosexual person is also called to live a life of chastity.

The only way that God has given us to raise children is through a marriage between a woman and man. As to the argument that not all married couples have children and that not all children are born in marriages, exceptions, however, do not invalidate but prove the rule. *Individual practices and choices do not determine the objectives of an institution such as marriage, which plays such a pivotal social role.* Same-sex marriages cannot produce children without the help of an opposite sex. Even if they do this with the help of some biotechnologies, do we not give a thought to the future of such children? Do these laboratory-manufactured babies not have a right to a family where they would be cuddled by a mother and supported

by a father? Is childbirth a right, which we can enforce through technological means? Are we right to determine before hand the sexual orientation of these future kids by raising them in a same-sex environment?