

## Same-sex marriage gay-bashing conference

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For several reasons, reports in two local English newspapers on a press conference this week interested me. The parley with the press was on the subject of possible legislation that would legalize same-sex marriage in Taiwan. I care about how society and individuals treat gays and lesbians. So, the newspaper coverage seemed important to me. The fact that religious leaders spoke against the possible legislation also interested me. As a Catholic priest, I somehow am a religious leader. How we religious leaders treat people matters to me.

The final and, in a way, least important reason this news event has stayed with me is that journalists for the two papers made slightly different decisions on English vocabulary (while managing to agree on the register of the language) in the process of translation from Chinese into English. Translation and language are academic areas close to my heart.

Are you the type of reader who finds pleasure in observing a blatant sample of attempted mind-manipulation by “mere language”? Local friends may find it difficult to recognize irony. For that reason, allow me to point out the irony in my words above. There is of course no such thing as mere language. Language in itself is always important.

The better rendering of the name of the group sponsoring the press event, by the way, was “Alliance of Religious Groups for the Love of Families Taiwan” (TT 9 - 19 - 13, p. 2).

The China Post reported that Chang Chuan-feng, vice president of The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, predicted clear consequences if same-sex marriage becomes legal here. “Traditional morality will disappear ... (and) there will be more and more homosexual people” (CP 9 - 19 - 13 p. 16). Chang spoke of the slippery slope effect if a change in the law were to happen. The legalization of same-sex marriage would lead to “the legalization of adultery and incest, as well (the promotion of) promiscuity.” Ah, the domino effect.

A reporter for a different newspaper rendered what are apparently the same Chinese words in this way: “Legalizing same-sex marriage is legalizing adultery, incest, and group sex” (TT 9-19-13 p. 2). According to Rev. Chang, legalization is “a downward step that will lead to the collapse of civilizations.” The report went on to say a different clergyman at the

conference remarked that schools would teach children “that it is OK to be gay.”

A rise in crime was sure to follow. “Children raised in same-sex families are more likely to become criminals,” he said, “or victims of sexual violence.”

Well, so much for language. The most important issue is not the choice of inflammatory vocabulary.

One fact that should bother thinking people is the alarmist spirit of the entire press conference. These religious leaders had the right to speak their minds, no question about that. But what was on their minds?

It is not acceptable to be a homosexual? What does that mean? As a Christian, I believe that all people are God's children. And speaking of children, are students (or persons of any age) who feel irresistibly drawn to their own gender morally or humanly flawed?

I was not at the conference, and thus do not know if the speakers made any effort to back up their preposterous words with evidence. The claim that children raised by gays or lesbians tend toward criminal behavior and will be victimized, for example, is deeply disturbing. What is the basis for such a remark?

Some 50 years ago, well-intentioned political leaders relied on the domino effect argument to urge Washington to go to war in Vietnam. “If Vietnam falls to communism, like dominos, one by one, other Asian countries will follow.” The claim proved to be as bogus as a wig. Legalization of same-sex marriage will in time change social attitudes, but not in the way these leaders say. In addition, can anyone with balanced reason actually see a link between same-sex marriage and incest, adultery, and promiscuity?

These are only personal views. I do not speak for this newspaper, for my university, or for my church.

Decent people of all religious persuasions should speak the truth. Gay-bashing is ignorant and ugly behavior. It is also morally repellant.

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