Letter to the Editor

A hopeful response to Dr. van den Aardweg

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Dear Dr. Williams,

This is an open letter regarding some thoughts and hopes for the spirit of writing about homosexuality in *The Linacre Quarterly*, prompted by my reading of: “Gay inspiration in the interim report of the bishops’ synod” by G.J.M. van den Aardweg (2015). I will also refer briefly to two other recent publications: “On the Psychogenesis of Homosexuality,” by the same author (van den Aardweg 2011); and: “Objections to Dr. Kinney’s article,” by an anonymous medical student, with a response by R. Kinney III (Anonymous 2014).

To preface, I am exceedingly thankful for the Catholic Church and pray to remain in the truth of her teachings, including those on homosexuality, marriage, and chastity (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1994, 2331–2400). If anything I write in this letter contradicts the magisterium of the Church, I would be very happy to be corrected.

Probably like most healthcare professionals and Catholics, I know little of the evidence of the causes of homosexuality, or what best helps people who are conscientiously living out this struggle in accordance with their faith. Despite my recent learning through reading these articles, I also experienced great unease.

These were the particular aspects that troubled me:

In his writing on the psychogenesis of homosexuality, Dr. van den Aardweg outlines at length the character faults of homosexual people and the psychological methods to address these, acknowledging that it is “a battle to grow in virtues while fighting the vices” (van den Aardweg 2011, 344). In his opinion piece he writes: “the psychological and medical problems of many practising homosexuals constitute a considerable and steadily increasing social burden” (van den Aardweg 2011, 102); he also identifies what he describes as “characteristic blindness of the gay activists, and their self-centredness” (van den Aardweg 2015, 103). He implies that the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, in their 2014 writing about the Church’s approach to homosexual people, have been contaminated by the “smoke of Satan” (van den Aardweg 2015, 105).

“Objections to Dr. Kinney’s article” is a one-paragraph letter by an anonymous medical student, who canceled membership to the Catholic Medical Association after reading a previous article by Dr. Kinney (Anonymous 2014). This paragraph generated a five-page response by R. Kinney III, which he concluded with:

"I welcome criticism, but it is difficult to respond to non-specific criticism, and it is unnecessary to respond to emotional outbursts" (Anonymous 2014, 202).

There is something disturbing in the spirit of these articles, which has taken me much reflection to pinpoint and translate. It is this: I cannot hear the Word of God in them. They are divisive, not unitive. They do not come across as gentle or humble or patient in their teaching. They convey what may easily be construed as disdain and repugnance for homosexual people, as though they were an impure people set apart in sin. I cannot think of homosexual people as being "other" than me, or sin related to homosexuality as something worse than my own sin, because the battle Dr. van den Aardweg writes of is the battle of every human being, and the only ones who were, are, and always will be victorious in this battle are our Lord Jesus and His Blessed Mother. If we think of any person or groups of people as a burden, such as occurs for the aged, dying, disabled, and the poor, our love and actions toward them are diminished. So I will not think of any person as a burden, only as a unique, loved, sacred child of God, and know them as my brother and sister.

While it is true that last year's initial synodal meetings raised many questions, some of them troubling, the synod process remains in progress. The pastors of the Church, united with our Holy Father, deserve our prayer and our commitment to remain faithful witnesses to the enduring teaching of the Church, as it is being articulated in our times.

I am therefore writing this letter to beg for kinder, humbler, more truly Catholic approaches to writing and teaching about people with disordered sexuality in *The Linacre Quarterly*. This is of even more

importance after the US Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage. How can we battle well for our souls and the souls of others in this time? As always: with prayer, fasting, humility, and mercy, and by listening to and debating each other with respect and courtesy, especially those who have a different view. We need to teach the truth as the beatific truth, and nurture the faith in our young medical and nursing students, who are the future carers of the sick.

Dr. van den Aardweg and Dr. Kinney have clearly devoted much of their academic energies to writing and teaching on this topic, which must be exceptionally challenging in the face of cultural misunderstanding and opposition. I appreciate them for their work and tenacity, and I thank them and you, Dr. Williams, for listening and responding to my concerns.

Yours sincerely,
Annmarie Hosie

REFERENCES

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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