

## Theologian Explains Catholic Teaching on Homosexuality

*"The body speaks the truth about man," he says*

by Frank York

Theologian James G. Knapp, S.J. has published a detailed analysis of Pope John Paul II's "Theology of the Body," which deals, in part, with the issue of homosexuality.

Father Knapp directly quotes Church teaching: "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved."

In addition, Knapp quotes from "On the Pastoral Care of the Homosexual Person" from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This Church document says that while homosexual attraction is not sinful, it "is more or less a strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."

The "Theology of the Body" begins with an instruction on the origins of mankind in Genesis, and God's plan for male and female, human sexuality, and reproduction. Pope John Paul quotes from Genesis 127-28, 31, which says, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it ... And God saw everything he had made, and behold it was very good." In the second chapter of Genesis, the Lord creates Eve out of Adam and both realize they are made for each other—and for reproduction.

On the contrary, however, the story of Sodom speaks of a sin that is "very grave" and that "cries to heaven" (Genesis 18:20-19:29).

Father Knapp notes that both the Old and New Testaments condemn homosexuality as a sinful act and that Church teachings have consistently held that homosexual acts are immoral. He quotes from the writings of St. Thomas in *Summa Theologiae*, who takes up a discussion of whether homosexual acts are the worst among sins of lust. St. Thomas quotes Augustine who said that "of all these, that which is against nature is the worst."

St. Thomas concludes that "by the unnatural vice, man transgresses that which has been determined by nature with regard to the use of venereal actions; it follows that in this matter, this sin is gravest of all. After it comes incest, which ... is contrary to the natural respect which we owe person related to us."

Father Knapp notes that sexual intercourse outside of marriage is immoral but that acts involving sexual intercourse

outside the context of male-female relationships are not only immoral but unnatural. "Such an act not only violates the good of marriage, but it violates the natural purpose of the sexual organs and the sexual power."

Homosexuality, Father Knapp notes, is inherently infertile and a homosexual relationship can never fulfill God's plan for reproduction.

### The Naturalness of Heterosexual Coupling

He quotes from a study done by Diane S. Dewane on the "Biochemistry of Unity and Indissolubility." In her study, Dewane investigated the role that oxytocin and vasopressin play in creating a bonding between a male and female during intercourse. She notes that "In humans, both male and female, there is a rush of this 'bonding' oxytocin during the climax of sexual intercourse. The same hormone has been found to be released in smaller quantities when stimulated by gentle caressing and cuddling."

The other hormone, vasopressin, is released in males after intercourse, "and seems to influence bonding as well," says Dewane. These chemicals work in a complementary way to bond males and females during intercourse.

The chemicals seem to play a role in prompting a desire for the male to remain with the female and to defend the relationship against outside influences.

Father Knapp quotes from the extensive research survey conducted by Michael Flanagan and published in *Linacre Quarterly* on "The Medical Abnormality of Homosexuality."

Knapp observes: "Dr. Flanagan's medical judgment, supported by the results of these many studies, is that homosexual activity involves behaviors that are dangerous and involve serious risks to health. Homosexual activity, whether pursued with many partners or only one, will have negative effects. The 'gay lifestyle' is not a healthy lifestyle."

Knapp concludes his essay by stating: "This theology illustrates as never before why the conjugal union of husband and wife is a sacred union given by God, and calls married and unmarried people to authentic, self-sacrificing unity, fidelity, and chastity. ...

"The body speaks the truth about man. The body expresses the person." ■