

January 30, 2006

Father Stephen A. Privett, SJ
President
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Father Stephen,

I'm writing you regarding the seminar: "*Is it Ethical to be Catholic? Queer perspectives*" to be held at Most Holy Redeemer Parish on February 12, 2006. The seminar is presented by the LGBTQ Caucus of USF, and is funded by the USF Jesuit Foundation.

I sincerely don't understand what the Jesuits are trying to do—or if I do understand, it scares me.

The Church teaches us that homosexuality is sinful. I'm not too interested in a learned discussion on whether this means homosexual "acts" or "desires". I mean the Church teaches that homosexuality is sinful, understood in an ordinary common-sense way—the way the man on the street or in the fields or the office or Ignatius Loyola would understand it: if doing something is sinful, desiring to do it (unless one fights those desires) must be sinful, too.

I think sin separates man from God. I think the reason Jesus came to earth and established the Church was to repair the separation of man from God. I think it is the job of priests to continue that work, as best they can. You may have a different or more comprehensive take on the reason for the Incarnation, but that's mine. If something prevents us from growing closer to God, it is the job of priests, continuing Jesus' work, to steer people away from it.

Why, then, I ask myself, is a Jesuit institution, run by priests of God, promoting a seminar that asserts that the problem is not with a sinful desire or act, but with the teaching of the Church that declares the desire or action sinful?

A number of possible explanations occur to me, but whatever motivates the promotion of the seminar, the result must be to lead people to judge the teachings of the Church using their own desires as the criteria.

In my own experience, which, in this case, I would be willing to generalize to everybody, my desires and what the Church says I should be doing are often in conflict. For me the teachings of the Church are sometimes hard to follow, and sometimes when I follow my desires, I inevitably ignore those teachings. That does not mean the teachings are wrong—it means I'm sinning.

I don't see how the seminar, which, in my opinion, encourages people to judge the teachings of the Church from the standpoint of their personal desires, helps Jesus' ongoing mission.

May the peace of Christ be with you!