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"Catholics" for a Free Choice Continue Assault on the Family

By Douglas A. Sylva

In its latest publication, the pro-abortion group "Catholics" for a Free Choice (CFFC) uses the HIV/AIDS epidemic in an attempt to undermine Catholic moral teaching on sexuality. In the pamphlet, "Sex in the HIV/AIDS Era, a Guide for Catholics," CFFC writes that, "Economic, social and cultural conditions have expanded and challenged the church's view that only in a lifelong, monogamous heterosexual marriage is sexual expression morally permitted."

According to CFFC, the movement away from marriage represents progress. The pamphlet makes the case that "as the world has changed people have also changed and attitudes and practices around sex have become more mature, responsible and compassionate." Part of this compassion involves recognizing that "not all sex outside of marriage is sinful. The ethical norms by which we judge the goodness of sex must expand beyond the mere technical fact of marriage." What is more, "same-sex commitments are rightly more accepted and the human and sexual rights of all people should be upheld regardless of sexual orientation." CFFC describes "sexual expression" within homosexual relationships as "healthy and holy."

In contrast, while CFFC approves of homosexual sex, they condemn the traditional Christian conception of sexuality within marriage saying it "does not promote responsible and mature sexuality..." Instead, mature sexuality occurs when there is a need for condoms and condoms are used. As CFFC asserts, "Using a condom should be a sign of trust and associated with responsible and mature sex."

The pamphlet is this year's installment in CFFC multi-year effort to undermine Church teaching on condoms and sexuality, entitled "Condoms4Life." CFFC claims "Condoms4Life is an unprecedented worldwide public education effort to raise public awareness about the devastating effect of the bishop's ban on condoms."

Much of this effort depends upon spreading misinformation about Church teaching. According to the pamphlet, "In reality, there is no one Catholic position on using condoms to prevent the transmission of AIDS....As Catholics we are free to choose which of these interpretations is most moral in our circumstances and to do what our consciences tell us is correct." Of course, this is incorrect.

CFFC also downplays the significance of condom failure rates. CFFC cites a UNAIDS report "that condoms have an estimated 90 percent rate of protection. The ten percent failure rate does not mean that 1 in 10 condoms is defective; human error – such as condoms slipping off, breaking, or not being used early enough or at all – also contributes to the failure rate."

Finally, CFFC attacks Uganda's successful HIV prevention strategy, which, according to USAID, relied on abstinence and fidelity, not condoms. CFFC objects to this "hierarchical approach to prevention," since "it reinforces negative attitudes towards sex and sexuality since abstinence is placed above having sex."