

A Storm Brewing Over Our Families

This past week, tornadoes dominated the domestic news. With thousands of homes and businesses destroyed, and at least 110 people dead so far, 2008 is pushing the limits. There have been worse years and far worse storms, but statistics seem to be piling up in a long-term negative trend.

In a single February night, strong tornadoes took 56 lives as they tore through Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, Alabama and Mississippi.

Among the more heart-wrenching stories is that of a mother found dead, huddled over her 4-year-old son. She'd been protecting him from a tornado in Picher, Oklahoma. It struck the night before Mother's Day.

Five days later, the California Supreme Court did something far more destructive to the American family than any tornado – or hurricane, for that matter – could ever do. In a bewildering lack of juridical common sense, four justices struck down the state's ban on same-sex marriage.

The current erosion of the family, and the often hostile environment in which dedicated parents struggle to maintain their homes, are bad enough.

We don't need four justices of the Supreme Court of California to re-define and undermine the most vital institution of society. Their defense of gay marriage is an offense to God, because God is the author of the human family, and God alone knows what makes for a healthy nation.

And, yes, God cares for the homosexual person with an infinite, undying, and life-giving love. He loves the homosexual with a love far greater than the Supreme Court, than the lover, even than the person him or herself. And in his Mercy, God establishes for us the Way of Life.

Recently, a person who's homosexual since childhood, despite all efforts to overcome or re-orient the tendency, told me, "I know what and who I am, and I know that God loves and understands me. At the same time, I would never support any movement to change the definition of marriage.

"God alone has the right to define marriage," the friend continued, "and the Church has to speak for God." Many gay Christians agree with this.

Many other homosexuals oppose gay marriage because they don't want to assume the stigmas, the baggage, and the liabilities that come with it.

Whatever their positions, the issue ultimately boils down to a very simple question: what was the intent of the framers of the constitution?

Didn't they take for granted that everyone would understand the obvious and that, in the end, God alone is the sole arbiter of the marriage debate?

But what the hell. Saying "one nation under God" is unconstitutional, and the latest silver dollar manages to omit the phrase "in God we trust".

As I write this lamentation, the graduating class of Manteca High School is striding out into an open field. Although I can't join the cheering crowd, I quietly offer a prayer for the road ahead. May it be full of hope.

Last night, together with a thousand family members, I shivered against the fence at Sierra High School. Four hundred graduating students sat there, also freezing, as the speakers shed light on an uncertain future. I ran out to mix with them as their families gathered around for snapshots.

Later, we crowded with graduates from East Union and Ripon High into Applebee's, IHOP, and innumerable other venues, not to mention the all-night vigil at Boomers. The hypothermia would soon-enough yield to over-heated conversations and the fever of youthful excitement. But I'm afraid that, with the current rate of foreclosures, job losses, and troubles for California kids, the Supreme Court hasn't made family life any easier.

And yet I see a storm brewing on the horizon. This one is generated out of the righteous indignation of a population whose freedoms and dignity are being eroded by members of powerful lobbies. The storm clouds are not just gathering overhead, in what sometimes looks like the frustration of a long-suffering Creator. They are not just rising up from the nation's churches and places of authentic worship. They aren't simply the senile, nostalgic whining of a generation dismissed as antiquated and obsolete.

The storm is brewing in every human heart, and in every community, in which the central desire is the glory of God and the restoration of a once-great nation to the dignity envisioned by its founders. It will keep stirring until it breaks out like a volcano erupting or a towering thunder-head exploding in the night. And, God willing, the storm won't subside until the United States of America has acknowledged, as a nation and as a people, that God exists, and that only in and under God can we survive.

This brewing storm is, politically-speaking, highly incorrect. So sorry.

Fr. Dean McFalls, Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Lathrop, 5/30/2008