

## THE YUCK FACTOR

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In our increasingly superficial culture, many moral decisions are made based on surface appearances, emotional reactions to those appearances, and an alarming lack of intellectual or volitional activity to check those emotional reactions. This has serious ramifications for all of us, including integral Catholics who want to evangelize the larger society of which we are a part.

Whereas many of the issues we might consider as specimens of this would be on the “left” side of the cultural divide — abortion, contraception, divorce, etc. — I will focus on only one issue, and keep myself to censuring those on the “right” side of that divide. (And the word “right” has a double meaning here.)

The issue is homosexuality. I am taking issue with those who are fundamentally correct in opposing the vice, but inadequately rooted in their principles and therefore unreliable in their actions.

The sin of Sodom is one of the “the sins that cry to Heaven for vengeance,” as listed in numerous official catechisms, including the *Douay Catholic Catechism* of 1649, the Catechism of St. Pius X, and the more recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (#1867). It is grave matter, which means that to commit it is a mortal sin, i.e., something so heinous that one instance of it alone is sufficient to merit its practitioner an eternity of damnation in hell, unless he repents.

It is also physically disgusting. The various acts associated with homosexuality carry inherent health threats that shorten people’s life spans almost twice as much as smoking does. Further, homosexuality is associated with a variety of subcultures that go from raunchy, to raunchier, to raunchiest.

The childish interjection one might be tempted to utter when hearing all this is *Yuck!*

It is, of course, natural for children as well as adults to reel back in revulsion like this. But, whereas we hope children never have to hear about these things or comment on them (we must respect the veil of their innocence), adults must learn to get beyond saying “Yuck!” They must transcend the “Yuck Factor.” Why? Because merely being *repulsed* by something that is morally offensive is not sufficient.

Homosexual acts are physically repulsive, as we said. But the same may be said for many other things: e.g., killing chickens, slaughtering cattle, fertilizing fields with dung, and much else that is associated with agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry. Yet chicken soup, a good steak, and farm-fresh fruits and vegetables are all wonderfully delicious and fortifying. The same person that might wince at

seeing Bambi dressed or Thumper skinned might really enjoy some delicious Venison Carne Guisada, Bigos, or Hasenpfeffer.

In these cases the physically grotesque aspect of the thing must be gotten over so that we see the intended good that lies beyond the “yuck.” Such things can serve as rites of passage for boys whose fathers take them hunting. And this is good for them; it teaches them to use their reason as human beings, and to get beyond the merely visceral reaction — even to viscera.

In the case of sodomy or other homosexual acts, there is an enormous difference. Yes, we must still use our reason as human beings. But when we do so — when we use our reason enlightened not only by the natural law but also by Faith and grace — we conclude that sodomy is wrong not merely because it is disgusting, but because it is an offense against the Eternal Law of God, both the natural law written on our hearts, and the supernaturally revealed Law of the Gospel found in Scripture and Tradition, and infallibly taught to us by God’s holy Church.

What might start off well as a mere revulsion for something morally outrageous must mature into Christian convictions based upon sound principles of Faith and reason.

The Catholic young man who tries to outdo his peer in bombastic bluster about queers is not more devoted to the Church’s teaching thereby. His imitation of the neanderthal crudities and vulgar language of the radio shock-jock does not make for a strong moral stance. Neither does unreasonable anger over the moral perversion of another. Such reactions are more knee-jerk emotional responses than the fruits of deep-seated Christian convictions.

The danger in this, besides its not being particularly helpful for the conversion of the homosexual, is that merely emotional reactions can give way over time as the young man grows older (if not more mature) and becomes horrified at his formerly hateful ways. In this case he might, in reacting against his earlier reactions, become more-or-less indifferent to the matter of homosexuality or other grave moral issues. (Yes, this happens.) A potential apostle and evangelist has just been successfully neutralized.

Said another way, if his opposition to homosexuality does not mature beyond the emotional level (the level of the passions) into willed convictions following an informed Catholic conscience, our would-be culture warrior might easily saunter into the enemy camp. The homosexual agitprop network and its allies in the information management business are past masters at emotional manipulation; it is their domain.

The answer, of course, is to guide young men into thinking and believing rightly about this and other moral matters. All this must be integrated into a robust sacramental and devotional life, for — to use the common parlance — their hearts must be formed as well as their heads. No, I would never

suggest we give up the struggle against homosexual activists (far be it from me), nor am I opposed to teaching the young to detest all that is unnatural and otherwise evil. But what is more pressing for parents is raising children that are morally upright because they have been properly formed in the truth, beauty, and goodness of both the natural and supernatural orders — and that, by a loving family that lives and breathes the Faith in and out of the home.

Teaching boys to grunt out anti-homo mantras is not the answer. Young men should, rather, learn to be Catholic Gentlemen — Cross-bearers, not knuckle-draggers.

Moreover, they should be formed to be saints. This means that they should have both fortitude and meekness, both zeal for their neighbor's salvation and zeal for the triumph of the Church over false religion, both love of God that reaches out to Him and holy fear that puts us in reverent awe before His Majesty. From its deep foundation of humility to its lofty spires of charity, the edifice of virtue must be strongly built if the Christian soul is to withstand the onslaughts of the world — all the more so if our intention is to sally forth into that world to evangelize it.

“Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good” (Romans 12:21).