

Married couples no better as parents, says Catholic marriage spokesman

Last updated: July 17th, 2009

Who said this?

"Statistically, children do best in a family where the adult relationship is steady, stable and loving. Note that I stress adult, not married, since there is no evidence that suggests that children do best with heterosexual couples."

Was it

(a) The head of the Consortium of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Anti-Discrimination voluntary and Community Organisations

(b) The chair of the Haringey and Islington Travellers, Roma and Refugees Education and Information Strategy Board

(c) Terry Prendergast, chief executive of Marriage Care, the Catholic Church-linked marriage agency which is still paid for by churchgoers up and down the country?

The answer, sadly, is (c). Well, at least he will say it today, in a speech due to be delivered today to gay and lesbian Catholics in Leicester.

Prendergast is proof that the culture wars are well and truly over (and we lost). Surely there is some second-rate university sociology department that could put him on the public payroll, one would think, and yet so far gone is the fanatical loony Left infiltration of British public life that he ends up working for the Catholic bureaucracy.

Not only is he doing a Ratner – maybe I'm a bit too literal but I would have thought the head of Marriage Care would, you know *promote* marriage – but what he's saying is untrue. He's making his speech in the same week as *Every Family Matters*, Iain Duncan Smith's devastating account of how the decline of marriage has destroyed British society, is published. In double-blind test after double-blind test all studies have shown that children in old-fashioned marriages have an almost unassailable advantage over those in "non-conventional" set-ups.

As sociologist Patricia Morgan told the *Catholic Herald*: "I can't believe that someone has come out with this. "We've had 20 years of very well-controlled statistics and all the time we get this repeated conclusion – children do best educationally, behaviourally and in every other sphere when raised by two original biological, married parents.

"Problems tend to be two or three times as likely with single parents, and with step-parents it varies on whether they are married."

Prendergast also said that "many families, and the individuals that make up these groups, other than married man, woman, and added child, find themselves discriminated against or denigrated... all these attempt to live out good, Catholic lives whilst being judged and bracketed by those in authority, or those who appear to have reached the Kingdom already.

"It is ironic that the state appears to be much more pastoral and compassionate in its acceptance of what family is. The fact that there are all kinds of benefits available for different family forms, and legal imperatives to support families suggests that the state is even more concerned for families than Church."

He also criticised ideas of the Holy Family that have their roots in "evangelical, Right-wing religious thought".

He said that many families who pray together "then prey on other people through their self-righteousness", and said that abuse is "rampant" in the traditional family, citing the cases of Josef Fritzl, who raped his prisoner daughter over a period of years, and Fred and Rosemary West, the serial killers.

The question is – what is the Church going to do about this man?