

Opinion: The human face of church's lack of respect

By Brian Cahill

I am a Catholic who voted against Proposition 8 in 2008 and contributed \$1,000 to the No on 8 Campaign, a Catholic who is sustained by regular Mass, scripture and prayer. I am also the father of a gay son, from whom I was slow to learn how painful, debilitating and denigrating are the constant legal and social reminders that he and those like him are not fully accepted members of the human community.

In their statement supporting Prop. 8, the California Catholic Bishops declared that marriage is "intrinsic to stable, flourishing and hospitable societies." Ironically, this is one of the compelling reasons gay and lesbian couples wish to be joined in civil marriages. They are seeking a structure and context for their love, commitment, fidelity and mutual support.

Many believe that the ideal for children is to be raised by a mother and a father, yet we know what the divorce rate is among heterosexual couples. We know there are 75,000 children in the California foster care system, a quarter of them waiting to be adopted. We know that these children have been victimized by the inability, neglect or abuse of their heterosexual parents. These mothers and fathers are living proof that sexual orientation is not a reliable indicator of good parenting.

Our bishops are clear that gays and lesbians must be respected and not disparaged, and I know they mean it. The archbishop of San Francisco, regardless of his position on Prop. 8, means it. His first response to specific issues regarding gays and lesbians is always pastoral.

Brian Cahill is the former executive director of Catholic Charities in San Francisco.

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