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Pride: A sin or celebration

Kate Childs Graham | Jun. 18, 2009

June is lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Pride month around the country. After a great weekend of Pride celebrations in our nation?s capitol, I began to reflect on the word pride; after all, its connotations can be both good and bad, especially for those of us who are practicing Catholics.

Pride, or hubris, is one of the seven deadly sins. In fact, it is considered by scholars to be the original and most serious of the sins. It separates one from their community and from God. With pride, one cannot recognize God? grace. Thomas Aquinas said that pride is "inordinate self-love?the cause of every sin ... the root of pride is found to consist in [hu]man not being, in some way, subject to God and [God?s] rule."

This is certainly not the pride I saw this weekend. The pride I saw this weekend was an expression of love and survival. It was a pride that brings people together, gay or straight. It was a joyful, and at times rowdy, pride. And though not a spiritual celebration, the grace of God was certainly present in these celebrations.

Every year, there are a few moments in the Pride parade that move me. As the parents of LGBT folks march with their signs reading ?I love my gay son? or ?Relationships are precious,? my heart swells with, well, pride. As those who have served in the military solemnly march in uniform with US flags, my eyes fill with tears. As people from religious congregations of every stripe, including Catholic, march and declare their stance that God is love, my spirit sings.

Now, there are obvious reasons why, for me, these are the moments that move me. I am lucky to have a family that accepts me. I am lucky not to work in a profession in which I must hide myself. And I am lucky to have found a church community that does not demonize me for my sexuality, although the church hierarchy continues to do just that.

I am proud that our country and church have come so far so that I can feel so lucky. There is no doubt, however, that our country and church still have a long way to come. And, in certain instances, one may even argue that pride interferes with some people?s ability to overcome their prejudice in order to grant equal rights to all people.

Take, for example, the U S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The bishops" position on same-gender relationships is widely known -- so I won?t go into that. However, what is perhaps less well known is how this position shadows the other good work they do.

Rep. Mike Honda, D-Calif. introduced the Reuniting Families Act (H.R. 2709) on June 5. This bill is a big step towards comprehensive immigration reform. This legislation would free immediate relatives of U.S. citizens from the bureaucratic nightmare that currently plagues families separated by borders and provide these family members with an easier and faster way to be with their families.

One would think that the bishops, with their historic and astounding support for the rights of immigrants, would be among the first to support this bill. Unfortunately, this is not the case. While the bishops have endorsed and

pledged to work for the enactment of the Senate version of the Reuniting Families Act (S. 1085), which Sen. Robert Menendez, D-N.J. introduced last month, the bishops wrote Honda to tell him that they couldn't support the House version. You see, the bishops have decided not to lend their support to this bill because it includes provisions for same-gender couples.

To me, it seems that the bishops are letting pride get in the way of supporting important legislation on immigrant rights. Their pride is so vast that they refuse to revise their teaching on same-gender relationships in light of today?s world and modern knowledge. Their pride is so great that they believe that their views on same-gender relationships must be imposed on all people. As a result of this pride -- while I hope this bill will pass with or without the support of the bishops -- families may indeed suffer. I hope that one day the U.S. bishops are able to push their pride aside for the good and equality of all.

So, is pride good or bad? I suppose it can be both. The pride I saw this weekend was certainly good. It was loving and inclusive. The pride of those who maintain prejudice and discriminate based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age and so on is not good. This pride is exclusive and destructive.

Let us all work to end prejudice and discrimination for all people, including those of us who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Let us all free ourselves of our pride that makes us unable to recognize the grace of God in same-gender relationships. When we do so, we can truly be proud of our church and society.

Read what Rep. Honda has to say about the Reuniting Families Act (**honda.house.gov/rfa/#summary** [1]) and read the bishops letter to the congressman (**www.usccb.org/mrs/mrp.shtml** [2]).

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