

Ask Mason & Teo



My brother is gay and thinking of marriage

Hello Mason and Teo, My brother lives in California and he is gay. We were brought up Catholic and because of his lifestyle he got kicked out of the Catholic Church. In California, recently, they passed a law that homosexuals can get married. He is thinking of marrying his gay partner. If two people love each other, why can't they get married? (Concerned Sister)

Dear Concerned Sister, The love you have for your brother is apparent through your concern for his well-being. We find it very difficult to believe that your brother "got kicked out of the Catholic Church" because of his lifestyle. In fact, no one is kicked out of the church for homosexual tendencies. Often, people leave because of difficulty with the church's teachings.

Sacred Scripture tells us that homosexual acts are gravely wrong. "Males likewise gave up natural relations with females and burned with lust for one another. Males did shameful things with males and thus received in their own persons the due penalty for their perversity." (Romans 1:27)

But the church makes the distinction between homosexual tendencies and homosexual behavior. We ALL have a tendency to sin. These desires in and of themselves are not sins, however to act upon them is a sin. "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when sin reaches maturity it gives birth to death." (James 1:14-15)

Anyone living in a sexual relationship outside of a valid heterosexual marriage — including an unmarried man and woman living together as well as two men or two women living together in a homosexual relationship — is not permitted to receive the sacraments. Yes, they are still members of the church, they are free to go to Mass, participate fully in parish activities, etc. Our church is made up of saints and sinners. However, in order to receive Holy Communion, each person must repent, renounce sin and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation confess all mortal sin.

A person not permitted to receive the sacraments is not "kicked out of the church." Christ died for all people, including your brother. "They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity." (CCC 2358)

The church is the guardian and teacher of the truth. The truth about marriage and sexuality comes from God, not man. The church helps us understand God and guards the truth of what marriage really is — the union of one man and one woman — regardless of what any state government says. The church cannot bend to political polls, popular opinion, selfishness or sin even if she wanted to, because the church did not make up these truths. The truth comes from God himself. The church upholds the truth.

The Catholic Church cannot recognize a same-sex relationship as a marriage simply because it is not a marriage. Marriage is a covenant designed and given to us by God. Spouses image the love of God within the Trinity, between God and all humanity, and made visible in the love of Christ and the church.

The spouses "one flesh" union, or sexual intercourse, is meant to participate in the very life and love of God. It makes visible the invisible mystery of God. It is a life-giving communion. The "one flesh" communion of husband and wife foreshadowed the eucharistic communion of Christ and the church from the beginning (Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31), which makes marriage the fundamental way God chooses to reveal his life and love in our world.

God gave us sexual desire as the power to love as he loves, so that we could participate in divine life, as co-creators with him, in selfless love. If we are truly to love others, then our love must conform to God, Christ's image of love. Otherwise, it is simply not love. Thus, sex outside of marriage is a violation against the virtue of chastity.

Chastity is not abstinence (not having sex). It is a virtue, or spiritual energy, by which we say "yes" to a long-term integration of our sexuality and unity in our bodily and spiritual lives. Chastity is that "yes" that allows us to affirm the value of the person in every situation and in every vocation. It gets us out of selfishness and moves us toward selflessness and holiness.

Our heavenly Father has given us a rock solid foundation in the church to overcome our weaknesses. God asks us to be perfect, only because he has given us divine life to make it possible. Of course, it doesn't mean that our lives will be free of struggle and suffering. No good father demands of his children more than he himself has given.

For our part, we need only to respond in loving obedience to the God who has given life to us. Continue to pray for your brother and share with him the good news of God's liberating grace to help him live according to God's original plan of love.

Mason and Teo Matsuda are parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Ewa Beach and have served in youth and young adult ministries for years. Write to them at yaadvice@yahoo.com.



The St. Francis School Show Choir performs at the Harbourside Ampitheatre, Darling Harbor, on July 16.

Alooooha, Sydney! Hawaii's musical gift

By Anna Weaver
Hawaii Catholic Herald

SYDNEY

Under an almost full moon, next to Darling Harbor glittering with the reflected lights of nearby skyscrapers, two Hawaii school groups performed on July 16 for World Youth Day pilgrims.

Five members of Kuliouou's Holy Trinity School beginning band were here to perform as one of many "youth festival" events taking place throughout the week. With band director Anne Martin and three other adults, they traveled with the St. Francis High School show choir.

Martin opened the 5 p.m. program with an "Alooooha!" The students then played a short set of tunes including "Jesus Loves Me," "Over the Rainbow," and "Kawaiupunahale," which band member Lokalia Isaia introduced in Hawaiian and danced hula to.

Dozens of pilgrims and passersby stopped to sit on the steps of the Harbourside Amphitheatre — a temporary World Youth Day venue — to listen.

Martin started a band class this

school year for sixth to eighth graders in the small east Honolulu school after receiving a general flier last spring announcing a search for student bands to perform at the global gathering.

Though they are a new group, the students performed with plenty of heart. Their pastor, Father Gary Secor, came to hear the results of their hard work.

"It's amazing because they've only been playing for nine months," he said. "It's an important experience for them to think back on this time [at WYD] as they become adults."

The St. Francis School Show Choir performed after their younger counterparts. The singers and four musicians, including one guy, are also a new group, formed by school band and choir director Mary Ann Lamedo within the last year.

The group members looked chilly in their purple muumuus, aloha shirts and bare feet. (They later changed into the slightly warmer ensemble of jeans, T-shirts and aloha shirts.) But you couldn't tell the temperature was in the 40s by their smiles and energy.

By the end of their half-hour performance of upbeat contemporary Christian music and dance, the show choir had attracted a large crowd who called for an encore. By that time, there were more than a dozen people dancing in front of the stage, including the rarely-seen-to-dance Father Secor.

One pilgrim who caught the performance was Sydneysider Shannon Harley, 18.

"I looked in the youth festival booklet at what was on today and I saw there was the St. Francis School Choir," she said.

It piqued her interest because she'll be going to Hawaii in October to visit her mother and see if she'll move there. She said St. Francis was great.

The St. Francis and Holy Trinity groups also performed on July 13 at St. Ambrose Church in Concord, west of Sydney.

They took in the sights and other experiences as well, including the "bridge climb" up Sydney Harbor Bridge. But their performances at World Youth Day were surely the highlights of their trip to Australia.



Anne Martin directs the Holy Trinity School band at the Harbourside Amphitheater in Sydney, July 16.

Movie reviews



CNS photo/Universal

Mamma Mia! (Universal): Lively and colorful adaptation of the popular stage musical, utilizing the songs of Abba, about a bride-to-be (Amanda Seyfried) who invites her mother's (marvelous Meryl Streep) three lovers from two decades earlier (Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth and Stellan Skarsgard) to her wedding in Greece after discovering that one of them may be her father. Original theater director Phyllida Lloyd has skillfully adapted the show, and the stars handle their songs with aplomb, but though joyful, humane and life-affirming with little visually offensive, a strong caution must be raised about the underlying "anything-goes-for-love" message and several other problematic elements. Overall freewheeling morality, light sexual references and innuendo, casual treatment of marriage, divorce and nonmarital relations, some vulgar gestures, brief rear-nudity sight gag, an anti-Catholic remark and a few crass words. L (PG-13)

Journey to the Center of the Earth (New Line/Walden): Enjoyable update of Jules Verne's classic 1864 novel with a present-day geology research professor (Brendan Fraser), his late explorer brother's son (Josh Hutcherson) and their Icelandic guide (Anita Briem) finding themselves deep below the earth's surface, reliving most of the incidents from the book. Though not as memorable as the Hollywoodized 1959 ver-

sion, this reread, from director Eric Brevig, provides plenty of nifty special effects — which are especially effective in the 3-D presentation used in some theaters — and together with personable leads and squeaky clean content make this wholesome family viewing for all but the very youngest viewers who might be frightened by some of the intense, though bloodless, action sequences. A-I (PG)

Meet Dave (20th Century Fox/Regency): Whimsical comedy in which the tiny captain (Eddie Murphy) of a human-shaped alien spaceship (also Murphy) gains the help of a kind-hearted young New York widow (Elizabeth Banks) and her bullied 11-year-old son (Austyn Lynd Myers) in his quest to save his home planet. Director Brian Robbins' film relies entirely on the single joke of Murphy's abject social awkwardness,

but along the way celebrates generosity, human decency and the heroic potential of seemingly ordinary people. Some mild scatological humor, a sexual reference and a brief profanity. A-II (PG)

The Dark Knight (Warner Bros./Legendary): Tumultuous, technically dazzling — if overlong and excessively complex — sequel to "Batman Begins" as the chiropteran crusader (Christian Bale) is challenged by the anarchic Joker (Heath Ledger) to reveal his true identity or else scores will die, while a romantic rival for his ex-girlfriend's (Maggie Gyllenhaal) affections — the upstanding district attorney (Aaron Eckhart), working in tandem with the city's crime unit chief (Gary Oldman) — strives to bring integrity to corrupt Gotham. Ledger is electrifying in his last completed performance, while director and co-writer Christopher Nolan brings consummate polish to the creation of a chaotic and brutal milieu, albeit one relieved by underlying decency. Bloodless but intense action violence including shootings, explosions and vehicular mayhem, but virtually no objectionable language or sexual elements. A-III (PG-13)

Space Chimps (Fox): Lively computer-animated children's adventure in which a happy-go-lucky circus performer (voice of Andy Samberg), whose grandfather was the first chimp astronaut, is invited to join a pompous commander (voice of Patrick Warburton) and his sensible lieutenant (voice of Cheryl Hines) on an all-simian mission to retrieve an expensive space probe that's gone astray, its technology enabling an overbearing alien (voice of Jeff Daniels) to become dictator of a distant planet. Despite less than stellar animation and an easily predictable plot trajectory, director and co-writer Kirk De Micco's light-hearted film provides warm family entertainment and offers lessons about maturity, resourcefulness and self-sacrifice. A-I (G)

Ratings

Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I — general patronage; A-II — adults and adolescents; A-III — adults; L — limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O — morally offensive.

Motion Picture Association of America ratings: G — general audiences, all ages admitted; PG — parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 — parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R — restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 — no one 17 or under admitted.

- 88 MinutesL (R)
- Baby MamaO (PG-13)
- BonnevilleA-II (PG)
- The Dark KnightA-III (PG-13)
- The Forbidden Kingdom...A-III (PG-13)
- Forgetting Sarah MarshallO (R)
- Get SmartA-III (PG-13)
- HancockA-III (PG-13)
- The HappeningA-III (R)
- Harold & Kumar Escape From Guantanamo BayO (R)
- Hellboy II: The Golden ArmyA-III (PG-13)
- The Incredible HulkA-III (PG-13)
- Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal SkullA-II (PG-13)
- Iron ManA-III (PG-13)
- Journey to the Center of the EarthA-I (PG)
- Kit Kittredge: An American GirlA-I (G)
- Kung Fu PandaA-I (PG)
- The Love GuruO (PG-13)
- Mamma Mia!L (PG-13)
- Meet DaveA-II (PG)
- Nim's IslandA-I (PG)
- The Rape of EuropaA-II (NR)
- Sex and the CityO (R)
- Space ChimpsA-I (G)
- Speed RacerA-II (PG)
- The StrangersL (R)
- Then She Found MeL (R)
- WALL-EA-I (G)
- WantedO (R)
- What Happens in VegasO (PG-13)
- Young@HeartA-III (PG)
- You Don't Mess With the ZohanO (PG-13)

OUR TURN



Therese J. Borchard | New Pew survey creates parish homework

A follow-up survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life has found that while more than half of Americans say that religion is very important in their lives, most Americans have a non-dogmatic approach to faith.

At the same time, a majority of adults affiliated with a religion want it to preserve its traditional beliefs and practices (rather than adopt new beliefs and practices based on modern culture).

More than 35,000 Americans responded to "The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey," which documents a nation of believers: Some 92 percent of Americans believe in God, 74 percent believe in life after death and 63 percent say their respective Scriptures are the word of God.

However, most Americans don't feel that their religion is the only way to eternal life, and many don't know — and don't care — about the fundamental teachings of their own faiths.

For example, 57 percent of people attending an evangelical church

said they believe many religions can lead to eternal life, which is in conflict with traditional evangelical teaching.

More than three-fourths of Catholics (79 percent) believe many religions can lead to eternal life, and just like Protestants, Jews and Muslims, they believe in multiple interpretations of Catholic teachings.

The new findings are consistent with the information that Jesuit John Coleman presented in his lecture "The Religion of Young Americans" for the Newman Center at the University of California, Davis.

"Religious illiteracy is high, and

young Americans, while they say religion is important to them, have a difficult time articulating what their religion is," said Father Coleman.

In his presentation, Father Coleman cited research from both Robert Wuthnow's study, "After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion," and Dean Hoge's "Young Adult Catholics: Religion in a Culture of Choice."

"After the Baby Boomers" says that in the period between the early 1970s when the baby boomers were 21 to 40 and right now when Generation Y (or the millennial genera-

tion) is in that same age range, there has been the biggest increase in the number of people who call themselves "nonreligious."

Hoge ended his book with a strong plea for a "preferential option for young adult Catholics." What does that mean?

For Father Coleman, that preferential option for young adult Catholics needs to be translated into diocesan and parish budgets, ministerial personnel and imaginative programs like the successful "Theology on Tap" at parishes across the country.

These programs should serve as support systems for young adults as they make core decisions about marriage, childrearing and careers.

But the outreach should also go beyond the parish, possibly to a consortium of neighboring parishes if one parish alone cannot fund the programs.

"Resources and energies should be directed toward helping young adult Catholics feel wanted, welcomed and actively involved," said Father Coleman.

The "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey" doesn't contain all bad news. We can see that Catholics — and even young adult Catholics — are still very faithful, needing to believe in God and appreciate the traditions surrounding their religion even if they don't understand them.

This new study, however, has laid out a considerable amount of homework for parish programs if the church wants to continue to thrive and grow in numbers.

By the numbers

How many babies did Pope Benedict kiss?

Here are some World Youth Day 2008 final statistics according to event officials.

- 223,000: registered pilgrims
- 170: nations represented
- 500 million: estimated international TV audience
- 450: youth festival events scheduled
- 300: WYD08 Choirmembers
- 1,000: priests hearing confessions
- 6: native Australian animals the pope met at the Taronga Zoo
- 24: people confirmed by the pope at the final Mass
- 4: babies kissed by the pope during his motorcades
- 8,000: WYD08 volunteers
- 4,000: priests and deacons
- 420: bishops
- 26: cardinals
- 1.1 million: Communion hosts made
- 25 million: food items ordered
- 3.6 million: meals distributed
- 400,000: people attending final Mass at Randwick Racecourse
- 232,000: candles used
- 4,000: toilets in use at the Southern Cross Precinct



CNS photo/Paul Haring

Priests distributes Communion during the closing Mass of World Youth Day at Royal Randwick Racecourse in Sydney, Australia, July 20.