

## CHURCH CHAT

BY

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### LUNCH

Two friends, both active Catholics, meet at Applebee's for lunch. Vince and Paul have been friends since high school, having many common interests, mutual friends, and decades of shared experiences. They disagree in two major areas, religion and politics, so they don't talk about those topics very much since they value their friendship and enjoy lunch together about once a month.

After the hostess seats them in a booth, Vince says:

"Well, I guess our votes canceled each other out but I'm glad it's over. All those negative ads just got me mad."

"On that, we agree", Paul replies with a smile and adds, "Many of the polls were flat out wrong; it wasn't nearly as close as they predicted. Makes me wonder if they were rigged."

The waiter comes, introduces himself as Andy, hands them their menus and asks for their drink orders. They both say tea.

Vince picks up the conversation: "I noticed that the bishops didn't do well either. Obama wins and I think it is three states, including Maryland that approved gay marriage. I never thought I would see the day."

Both men are quiet for a while as they realize they were now talking about the two topics they usually skirt. Simultaneously. While they study their menus, the friends struggle with how they can continue the conversation without damaging their relationship.

Paul, somewhat distractedly, admits: "I'm really not that surprised those states voted in favor of gay marriage. It's been headed that way for a number of years and, eventually, with the younger generations, it will be pretty much accepted in most places."

Vince looks up from his menu and cautiously replies: "I hate to see that day. Our society is heading in the wrong moral direction to begin with and gay marriage is a terrible step in that wrong direction."

The two friends notice that Andy has returned for their orders. Vince chooses the roast beef, bacon and mushroom melt and Paul decides on the three-cheese chicken penne.

Paul delicately goes back to the conversation. “I don’t know, Vince. I never felt that strongly about gay marriage but, frankly, I never thought about it too much at all. I always figured it was wrong but, over the last few years, I’ve been following it more closely and I am looking at it a little differently now.”

“Wait a minute” responds Vince a little more agitated than he wants to be. “You’re not in favor of gay marriage, are you? Church teaching has been and is very clear about this: marriage is for one man and one woman. Period. End of discussion. The Bishops say that homosexuality is intrinsically disordered. You can’t get around that.”

After some uncomfortable silence and a few comments about sports, Andy brings their food. Paul decides to clarify his position a little. “I’m not sure the gay marriage thing is as black and white as you say. The core of marriage is about relationship, commitment, forgiveness, growth, respect, understanding, love. It is not primarily biological, or to be blunt, genital. And we don’t have to worry about procreating; as a race, we’ve done that very well. So, I’m beginning to think that, if marriage is really about a unique relationship, it could also include two men or two women.”

“But”, Vince objects, “Official gay marriages will ruin the sanctity of marriage.”

Paul answers more quickly and more sarcastically than he wants: “More than half of heterosexual marriages end in divorce now. Straight couples have already ruined the sanctity of marriage. Living together without marriage is rampant. The impact of gay marriages is minor compared with the damage already done.”

More silence. More sports. But Vince was not finished with the gay marriage topic. “I don’t buy it, Paul. In my mind, gays will have to abstain from sexual activity, and do the best they can. I can’t imagine God seeing it any other way. I will try not to judge homosexuals, but I believe God will judge them negatively.”

“That’s OK, Vince. I’m not trying to convince you.” And he added with a smile that only old friends recognize, “I know I can’t do that anyway! I’m just telling you what I’m thinking these days.”

By this time, Andy has cleared the table and brought their checks. The friends set the next date and place for lunch, and leave. Vince is a few steps ahead of Paul and as they are walking to the door, Andy stops Paul and says, his voice quivering: “I overheard part of your conversation. Thank you for defending me and my partner.”