



القديسان سرجيوس و باكنوس

## History of Saints Sergius and Bacchus

Sergius and Bacchus were soldiers in the Roman army, attached to the household of the Emperor Maximilian. They were Christians. Moreover, they were lovers. However, it was not for their sexuality these young men were canonized. It was for their faith -- one of history's most poignant ironies, given the church's unflinching campaign against gay love. When ordered to enter the Temple of Jupiter to participate in a sacrificial ceremony to the god, they refused. For this act of defiance, the lovers were stripped of their arms and badges of rank, dressed in women's clothing and led through the streets of Arabissus (near Comana in Cappadocia) -- for a Roman soldier, an abject humiliation. Then they were sent to Resapha in Syria (Augusta Euphratesiae in Mesopotamia), where they were tortured. Bacchus was whipped until his flesh was raw; he died October 1st AD290, confessing his faith in Christ.

Sergius's faith faltered with the death of his lover, but was reinforced when Bacchus appeared to him in a vision saying, "I am still with you in the bond of our union." Sergius kept the faith; after torture, he was beheaded on October 7 AD290. Like his lover, he died a martyr to the new religion.

The tomb of S. Sergius at Resapha became a famous shrine and was honored by great gatherings of Christians because of the frequent miracles there. Sergius and Bacchus became the heavenly protectors of the Byzantine army, with the two Theodores, Demetrius, Procopius and George. Their "acts" are preserved in Latin, Greek and Syria. In AD431, Bishop Alexander of Hierapolis built a magnificent church in his honor. In 434, the town of Resapha was raised to the rank of an episcopal see, was named Sergiopolis, and soon became one of the greatest pilgrimage centers of the East. Many churches in many towns bore the name of Sergius (sometimes with Bacchus) and in the seventh century, a church was dedicated to them in Rome.

During the Middle Ages, the relationship of Sergius and Bacchus was considered an exemplar of compassionate union, and possibly even marriage, based on agape (brotherly love) and mutual respect. In the East, Sergius and Bacchus were universally honored. Since the seventh century they have had a celebrated church in Rome. Christian Art represents the two saints as soldiers in military garb with branches of palm in their hands. Their feast is observed on 7 October.

**Rev. Robert Francis Johnene**

**Mission Sts. Sergius and Bacchus**

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## Catholic Theological Defense of Same-sex Marriage

Catholic theologian Daniel Maguire of Marquette University has recently issued a well-presented defense of same-sex marriage. He states that in time the Roman Catholic Church will come to accept equality in marriage. This, of course, is already a reality for the Eucharistic Catholic Church and many other Independent Catholic Churches. As such, we stand as witnesses to God's infinite love. Maguire asserts that the desire to bond lovingly and sexually with persons of the same sex or of the opposite sex, is a fact of life, a fact of God's creation. Referring to the Acts of the Apostles 10: 15, he emphasizes that we have no right to declare unclean anything that God has made; to do so, in fact, is a sin.

Maguire defines marriage in no heterosexist terms as the unique and special form of committed friendship between sexually attracted persons. He states that "marriage is a supreme human good involving exclusive, committed, enduring, generous, and faithful love, and that kind of love is not something that only heterosexuals can achieve." He forcefully declares: "We have no moral right to declare marriage off limits to persons whom God has made gay. We have no right to say that marriage, with all of its advantages and beauty, is a reward for being heterosexual."

Professor Maguire then proceeds to discuss the objections presented against marriage equality, taking as his guide St. Thomas Aquinas. The main objection is the one arising from Biblical texts. Maguire follows a Catholic interpretation in pointing out that Biblical texts need to be interpreted in the context of the times when they were written. Therefore, in understanding how the Bible can treat slavery as a fact of life and condone capital punishment in certain cases, we have come to the position that Biblical texts often "*described* the way life was lived at that time but did not *prescribe* that we should live that way." This is the case with the Biblical texts used as grounds for condemning homosexuality.

Maguire then asks the question whether the Pope is wrong on this issue. Consonant with our position he answers: "I would join many other Catholic theologians in saying that he is definitely wrong and he will be corrected some day by one of his successors and by the rest of the church as previous popes who permitted slavery etc. were corrected."

In conclusion, Maguire rightly states that "homosexuality is not a sin. Heterosexism (prejudice against people who are homosexual) is a sin. It is a serious sin because it violates justice, truth, and love. It also distorts the true meaning of sex and thus also harms everyone, including heterosexuals."

Most Rev. Roger LaRade, O.F.A.

[www.undiscoveredself.com/sppm](http://www.undiscoveredself.com/sppm)

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Distributed by

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