



What Happens When Contracts Replace Personal Morality...

BY PHIL COOKE

Since in today's secular culture, the concept of "morality" is outdated, it's interesting to see the incredible effort that's being put into finding a substitute. Enter the **Affirmative Consent Project**. In an effort to defeat the supposed "rape culture" on U.S. college campuses, this organization is suggesting couples in love should have a contract. Among other things, they suggest the couple take a "selfie" to document their decision to hook up – just in case you get into court later. After all, if personal morality doesn't exist, how else do we protect women? Phil Lawler, in his column at CatholicCulture.org decided to give the Affirmative Consent Project some suggestions to add into the contract. With tongue firmly planted in cheek, the list points to something that used to exist. Writes Lawler:

- ✓ Rather than just a "selfie," hire a professional photographer to take pictures as the consent is given. And rather than relying exclusively on photographic evidence, have human witnesses. Invite family and friends.
- ✓ We all make silly spur-of-the-moment decisions at times. To be sure this isn't one of them, plan the exchange of consent well in advance. Send out invitations. Since this is (we hope) a joyous occasion, throw a party.
- ✓ To be very sure that the young woman is giving informed consent (the ACP notes that if she's drunk, it doesn't count), let's involve someone who will be sure to watch out for her best interests. Her father, say. If she walks into the party on his arm, we'll know that everything is as it should be.
- ✓ Still this shouldn't be just a party, because this is serious business. So let's have the exchange-of-consent ceremony in a venue that suggests a serious purpose. Can't beat a church for that, can you?

You see where I'm headed. For centuries, society has had a simple, reliable way to ascertain whether a couple had exchanged mutual consent to engage in sexual relations. **It was called a marriage.** Once the ties between marriage and sex were broken—and we heard the last thread pop on June 26—the question of consent became insoluble.

How do you really—I mean really—know that full consent has been given, if it's not given in public, before witnesses? How do you know that your partner will be faithful, if there isn't a pledge of fidelity? How can you be confident that things won't go terribly wrong, unless your partner vows to stay with you through good times and bad? You don't. You can't.

Touche'.

