

# Church's teaching on homosexuality

## Catechism of the Catholic Church

2357 Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained.

Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

2358 The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfil God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

2359 Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.

## Congregation for the Catholic Education - *Male and Female He created Them* - 2019

4. The Christian vision of anthropology sees sexuality as a fundamental component of one's personhood. It is one of its mode of being, of manifesting itself, communicating with others, and of feeling, expressing and living human love. Therefore, our sexuality plays an integral part in the development of our personality and in the process of its education: "In fact, it is from [their] sex that the human person receives the characteristics which, on the biological, psychological and spiritual levels, make that person a man or a woman, and thereby largely condition his or her progress towards maturity and insertion into society". As each person grows, "such diversity, linked to the complementarity of the two sexes, allows a thorough response to the design of God according to the vocation to which each one is called".

## **CDF, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the pastoral care of homosexual persons - 1986**

2. It is within this context, then, that it can be clearly seen that the phenomenon of homosexuality, complex as it is, and with its many consequences for society and ecclesial life, is a proper focus for the Church's pastoral care. It thus requires of her ministers attentive study, active concern and honest, theologically well-balanced counsel.

3. Explicit treatment of the problem was given in this Congregation's "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics" of December 29, 1975. That document stressed the duty of trying to understand the homosexual condition and noted that culpability for homosexual acts should only be judged with prudence. At the same time the Congregation took note of the distinction commonly drawn between the homosexual condition or tendency and individual homosexual actions. These were described as deprived of their essential and indispensable finality, as being "intrinsically disordered", and able in no case to be approved.

7. The Church, obedient to the Lord who founded her and gave to her the sacramental life, celebrates the divine plan of the loving and life-giving union of men and women in the sacrament of marriage. It is only in the marital relationship that the use of the sexual faculty can be morally good. A person engaging in homosexual behaviour therefore acts immorally.

To chose someone of the same sex for one's sexual activity is to annul the rich symbolism and meaning, not to mention the goals, of the Creator's sexual design. Homosexual activity is not a complementary union, able to transmit life; and so it thwarts the call to a life of that form of self-giving which the Gospel says is the essence of Christian living. This does not mean that homosexual persons are not often generous and giving of themselves; but when they engage in homosexual activity they confirm within themselves a disordered sexual inclination which is essentially self-indulgent.

8. Nevertheless, increasing numbers of people today, even within the Church, are bringing enormous pressure to bear on the Church to accept the homosexual condition as though it were not disordered and to condone homosexual activity. Those within the Church who argue in this fashion often have close ties with those with similar views outside it. These latter groups are guided by a vision opposed to the truth about the human person, which is fully disclosed in the mystery of Christ. They reflect, even if not entirely consciously, a materialistic ideology which denies the transcendent nature of the human person as well as the supernatural vocation of every individual.

The Church's ministers must ensure that homosexual persons in their care will not be misled by this point of view, so profoundly opposed to the teaching of the Church. But the risk is great and there are many who seek to create confusion regarding the Church's position, and then to use that confusion to their own advantage.

9. The movement within the Church, which takes the form of pressure groups of various names and sizes, attempts to give the impression that it represents all homosexual persons who are Catholics. As a matter of fact, its membership is by and large restricted to those who either ignore the teaching of the Church or seek somehow to undermine it. It brings together under

the aegis of Catholicism homosexual persons who have no intention of abandoning their homosexual behaviour. One tactic used is to protest that any and all criticism of or reservations about homosexual people, their activity and lifestyle, are simply diverse forms of unjust discrimination.

There is an effort in some countries to manipulate the Church by gaining the often well-intentioned support of her pastors with a view to changing civil-statutes and laws. This is done in order to conform to these pressure groups' concept that homosexuality is at least a completely harmless, if not an entirely good, thing. Even when the practice of homosexuality may seriously threaten the lives and well-being of a large number of people, its advocates remain undeterred and refuse to consider the magnitude of the risks involved.

The Church can never be so callous. It is true that her clear position cannot be revised by pressure from civil legislation or the trend of the moment. But she is really concerned about the many who are not represented by the pro-homosexual movement and about those who may have been tempted to believe its deceitful propaganda. She is also aware that the view that homosexual activity is equivalent to, or as acceptable as, the sexual expression of conjugal love has a direct impact on society's understanding of the nature and rights of the family and puts them in jeopardy.

10. It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs. It reveals a kind of disregard for others which endangers the most fundamental principles of a healthy society. The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law.

But the proper reaction to crimes committed against homosexual persons should not be to claim that the homosexual condition is not disordered. When such a claim is made and when homosexual activity is consequently condoned, or when civil legislation is introduced to protect behaviour to which no one has any conceivable right, neither the Church nor society at large should be surprised when other distorted notions and practices gain ground, and irrational and violent reactions increase.

11. It has been argued that the homosexual orientation in certain cases is not the result of deliberate choice; and so the homosexual person would then have no choice but to behave in a homosexual fashion. Lacking freedom, such a person, even if engaged in homosexual activity, would not be culpable.

Here, the Church's wise moral tradition is necessary since it warns against generalisations in judging individual cases. In fact, circumstances may exist, or may have existed in the past, which would reduce or remove the culpability of the individual in a given instance; or other circumstances may increase it. What is at all costs to be avoided is the unfounded and demeaning assumption that the sexual behaviour of homosexual persons is always and totally compulsive and therefore inculpable. What is essential is that the fundamental liberty which characterises the human person and gives him his dignity be recognised as belonging to the homosexual person as well. As in every conversion from evil, the abandonment of homosexual activity will require a profound collaboration of the individual with God's liberating grace.

12. What, then, are homosexual persons to do who seek to follow the Lord? Fundamentally, they are called to enact the will of God in their life by joining whatever sufferings and difficulties they

experience in virtue of their condition to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross. That Cross, for the believer, is a fruitful sacrifice since from that death come life and redemption. While any call to carry the cross or to understand a Christian's suffering in this way will predictably be met with bitter ridicule by some, it should be remembered that this is the way to eternal life for all who follow Christ.

It is, in effect, none other than the teaching of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians when he says that the Spirit produces in the lives of the faithful "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control" (5:22) and further (v. 24), "You cannot belong to Christ unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires."

It is easily misunderstood, however, if it is merely seen as a pointless effort at self-denial. The Cross is a denial of self, but in service to the will of God himself who makes life come from death and empowers those who trust in him to practise virtue in place of vice.

### **CDF, SOME CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE RESPONSE TO LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS ON THE NON-DISCRIMINATION OF HOMOSEXUAL PERSONS, 1992**

7. As in every moral disorder, homosexual activity prevents one's own fulfilment and happiness by acting contrary to the creative wisdom of God. The Church, in rejecting erroneous opinions regarding homosexuality, does not limit but rather defends personal freedom and dignity realistically and authentically understood.

### **CDF, Responsum ad dubium - 2021**

In some ecclesial contexts, plans and proposals for blessings of unions of persons of the same sex are being advanced. Such projects are not infrequently motivated by a sincere desire to welcome and accompany homosexual persons, to whom are proposed paths of growth in faith, "so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives."

Consequently, in order to conform with the nature of sacramentals, when a blessing is invoked on particular human relationships, in addition to the right intention of those who participate, it is necessary that what is blessed be objectively and positively ordered to receive and express grace, according to the designs of God inscribed in creation, and fully revealed by Christ the Lord. Therefore, only those realities which are in themselves ordered to serve those ends are congruent with the essence of the blessing imparted by the Church.

For this reason, it is not licit to impart a blessing on relationships, or partnerships, even stable, that involve sexual activity outside of marriage (i.e., outside the indissoluble union of a man and a woman open in itself to the transmission of life), as is the case of the unions between persons of the same sex. The presence in such relationships of positive elements, which are in themselves to be valued and appreciated, cannot justify these relationships and render them legitimate objects of an ecclesial blessing, since the positive elements exist within the context of a union not ordered to the Creator's plan.

Furthermore, since blessings on persons are in relationship with the sacraments, the blessing of homosexual unions cannot be considered licit. This is because they would constitute a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing invoked on the man and woman united in the sacrament of Matrimony, while in fact “there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family”.

The declaration of the unlawfulness of blessings of unions between persons of the same sex is not therefore, and is not intended to be, a form of unjust discrimination, but rather a reminder of the truth of the liturgical rite and of the very nature of the sacramentals, as the Church understands them.

The Christian community and its Pastors are called to welcome with respect and sensitivity persons with homosexual inclinations, and will know how to find the most appropriate ways, consistent with Church teaching, to proclaim to them the Gospel in its fullness. At the same time, they should recognise the genuine nearness of the Church – which prays for them, accompanies them and shares their journey of Christian faith – and receive the teachings with sincere openness.

The answer to the proposed *dubium* does not preclude the blessings given to individual persons with homosexual inclinations, who manifest the will to live in fidelity to the revealed plans of God as proposed by Church teaching. Rather, it declares illicit any form of blessing that tends to acknowledge their unions as such. In this case, in fact, the blessing would manifest not the intention to entrust such individual persons to the protection and help of God, in the sense mentioned above, but to approve and encourage a choice and a way of life that cannot be recognised as objectively ordered to the revealed plans of God.

At the same time, the Church recalls that God Himself never ceases to bless each of His pilgrim children in this world, because for Him “we are more important to God than all of the sins that we can commit.” But he does not and cannot bless sin: he blesses sinful man, so that he may recognise that he is part of his plan of love and allow himself to be changed by him. He in fact “takes us as we are, but never leaves us as we are.”

For the above mentioned reasons, the Church does not have, and cannot have, the power to bless unions of persons of the same sex in the sense intended above.

#### **CCF, *Fiducia supplicans*, 2023**

4. Pope Francis’ recent response to the second of the five questions posed by two Cardinals offers an opportunity to explore this issue further, especially in its pastoral implications. It is a matter of avoiding that “something that is not marriage is being recognised as marriage.” Therefore, rites and prayers that could create confusion between what constitutes marriage—which is the “exclusive, stable, and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to the generation of children”- and what contradicts it are inadmissible. This conviction is grounded in the perennial Catholic doctrine of marriage; it is only in this context that sexual relations find their natural, proper, and fully human meaning. The Church’s doctrine on this point remains firm.

11. Basing itself on these considerations, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's Explanatory Note to its 2021 Responsum recalls that when a blessing is invoked on certain human relationships by a special liturgical rite, it is necessary that what is blessed corresponds with God's designs written in creation and fully revealed by Christ the Lord. For this reason, since the Church has always considered only those sexual relations that are lived out within marriage to be morally licit, the Church does not have the power to confer its liturgical blessing when that would somehow offer a form of moral legitimacy to a union that presumes to be a marriage or to an extra-marital sexual practice. The Holy Father reiterated the substance of this Declaration in his Respuestas to the Dubia of two Cardinals