

# ILLUMINATING CHURCH TEACHINGS ON HOMOSEXUALITY

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**Dr. Arthur Fitzmaurice**

Resource Director, Catholic Association for Lesbian and Gay Ministry

rd@calgm.org

<http://www.calgm.org>

@LGBTcatholic

**Rev. Chris Ponnet**

Spiritual Director, LA Catholic Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Catholics

cponnet@stcamilluscenter.org

<http://www.lgbtcatholics.org>

## Three categories of teachings from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

1. All created in God's image possess an innate human dignity that must be acknowledged and respected
2. Harassment, discrimination, hatred, and violence against homosexual persons must not be tolerated
3. All are called to chastity

### 1. Dignity of the Human Person

"All people are created in the image and likeness of God and thus possess innate human dignity that must be acknowledged and respected."

"They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity."

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1700-1702, 2358*

"This child, who has always been God's gift to you, may now be the cause of another gift: your family becoming more honest, respectful, and supportive."

*USCCB, "Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers," 1997*

### 2. Hatred, Harassment, Discrimination Must Not Be Tolerated

"All homosexual persons have a right to be welcomed into the community, to hear the word of God, and to receive pastoral care...[and] should have opportunities to lead and serve the community."

*USCCB, "Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers," 1997*

"We recognize that these persons have been, and often continue to be, objects of scorn, hatred, and even violence in some sectors of our society. Sometimes this hatred is manifested clearly; other times, it is masked and gives rise to more disguised forms of hatred."

*USCCB, "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care," 2006*

"Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided."

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2358*

"It is deplorable that homosexual persons have been and are objects of violent malice in speech or in action. Such treatment deserves condemnation from the Church's pastors wherever it occurs."

*Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," 1986*

“Homosexuals, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. They have a right to respect, friendship, and justice. They should have an active role in the Christian community.”

*National Conference of Catholic Bishops, “To Live in Christ Jesus,” 1976*

“We call on all Christians and citizens of good will to confront their own fears about homosexuality and to curb the humor and discrimination that offend homosexual persons. We understand that having a homosexual orientation brings with it enough anxiety, pain, and issue related to self-acceptance without society adding additional prejudicial treatment.”

*USCCB, “Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning,” 1991*

### **3. All Are Called to Chastity**

“Christ is the model of chastity. Every baptized person is called to lead a chaste life, each according to [her/]his particular state of life.”

“Chastity means the integration of sexuality within the person.”

“The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in [her/]him. This integrity...tolerates neither a double life nor a duplicity in speech.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2394-2395, 2338*

“Homosexual orientation is experienced as a given, not as something freely chosen.”

*USCCB, “Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers,” 1997*

“I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts.”

*Jeremiah 31:33*

“The demands of the law are written in their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness.”

*Romans 2:15*

“Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment.... For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God.... His conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church #1776*

“And yet all the conditioning and efforts to enforce silence fail to stifle the voice of the Lord echoing in the conscience of every individual: it is always from this intimate sanctuary of the conscience that a new journey of love, openness, and service to human life can begin.”

*Pope John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, 1995*

***“You are always my child;  
nothing can ever change that.  
You are also a child of God,  
gifted and called for a purpose in God’s design.  
In you, God’s love is revealed.”***

***Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers (USCCB, 1997)***



## UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

### Summary of two documents by Fr. Chris Ponnet, Spiritual Director/Host, LA Archdiocese Catholic Ministry with Lesbian and Gay Persons

The mission of the Church is to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people and to minister to all people in his name. In our time and culture, special challenges are faced by those Church members who carry out this mission among persons who experience same-sex attraction. There are many forces in our society that promote a view of sexuality in general and of homosexuality in particular, not in accord with God's purpose and plan for human sexuality. To offer guidance in the face of pervasive confusion, the Catholic bishops of the United States find it timely to provide basic guidelines for pastoral ministry to persons with a homosexual inclination or tendency. These guidelines are intended to assist bishops in evaluating existing or proposed programs and ministerial efforts and to provide direction and guidance for those engaged in this ministry.

#### **"MINISTRY TO PERSONS WITH A HOMOSEXUAL INCLINATION: GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL CARE" (USCCB, 2006)**

##### **CHURCH PARTICIPATION**

- Welcoming
- Encourage active role in spiritual life and community
- Understanding and support church position on blessings and responsibility connected to human sexuality
- Acknowledge pain and alienation in society and church
- Church policy is against any discrimination

##### **CATECHESIS**

- Catechesis ought to be welcoming yet challenging, charitable but firm in truth
- Education first by parents and church should assist
- Training catechesis in this area is important
- Moral choices ought to be based on sound moral teaching
- Teaching by priest from pulpit should include the call to live chastity, selfless love, fortitude, temperance etc.
- Denounce unjust discriminatory and violent behaviors against homosexual persons and parish social justice ministry should include in their teaching
- Local bishops need to oversee local materials for teaching
- Teaching young people need to reflect the true nature and purpose of human sexuality

##### **SACRAMENTS AND WORSHIP**

- Invited and encouraged to participate fully and regularly in sacramental life including Eucharist
- Discipleship is our goal and people love at various paces and stumble along so Penance is a gift
- Marriage is between one man and one woman
- Church does not support adoption by a same sex couple
- The Church does not refuse the Sacrament to those children in a same sex home but calls for prudent judgment and clarity on natural and adoptive parents.

## **PASTORAL SUPPORT**

- Spiritual direction is encouraged for person
- Encouragement to young people is key.
- Pastoral support and counseling services out to be made readily available
- Support groups are encouraged and not solely defined by their inclination and affirmed in the larger community
- Adolescents should have access to age appropriate professional counseling.
- Counselors should be chosen with catholic teaching in mind
- Pastoral Care to those living with HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases should be available.
- Family support groups are encouraged.
- Organizations that support a chaste and holy life are encouraged

## **CLOSING**

- Cultural awareness is needed
- Dialogue to the stories of persons and family members

## **“ALWAYS OUR CHILDREN” (USCCB, 1997)**

**Pastoral Recommendations:** With a view toward overcoming the isolation that you or your son or daughter may be experiencing, we offer these recommendations to you as well as to priests and pastoral ministers.

### **To Parents:**

- Accept and love yourselves as parents in order to accept and love your son or daughter. Do not blame yourselves for a homosexual orientation in your child.
- Does everything possible to continue demonstrating love for your child... you may need to challenge certain aspects of a lifestyle that you find objectionable?
- Urge your son or daughter to stay joined to the Catholic faith community. .
- Recommend that your son or daughter find a spiritual director/mentor.
- Seek help for yourself, perhaps in the form of counseling or spiritual direction.
- Reach out in love and service to other parents struggling with a son or daughter's homosexuality.
- As you take advantage of opportunities for education and support
- Put your faith completely in God, who is more powerful, more compassionate, and more forgiving than we are or ever could be.

### **To Church Ministers:**

- Be available to parents and families who ask for your pastoral help, spiritual guidance, and prayer.
- Welcome homosexual persons into the faith community, and seek out those on the margins. Avoid stereotyping
- Learn more about homosexuality and church teaching so your preaching, teaching, and counseling will be informed
- When speaking publicly, use the words "homosexual," "gay," and "lesbian" in honest and accurate ways.
- Maintain a list of agencies, community groups, and counselors or other experts to whom you can refer
- Help to establish or promote support groups for parents and family members.
- Learn about HIV/AIDS so you will be more informed and compassionate in your ministry. Include prayers in the liturgy for those living with HIV/AIDS, their caregivers, those who have died, and their families, companions, and friends. A special Mass for healing and anointing of the sick might be connected with World AIDS Awareness Day (December 1) or with a local AIDS awareness program.