

## **CONSIDERATIONS ON UNIONS BETWEEN HOMOSEXUAL PERSONS**

VATICAN CITY, JUL 31, 2003 - Made public today was the document, "Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons," published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The document, which was dated June 3, 2003, was approved by the Pope who then ordered its publication. It was signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and Archbishop Angelo Amato, S.D.B., respectively prefect and secretary of the dicastery. The text has been published in English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Portuguese and Polish and consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion.

Following are excerpts of the document:

"INTRODUCTION. In recent years, various questions relating to homosexuality have been addressed with some frequency by Pope John Paul II and by the relevant Dicasteries of the Holy See. Homosexuality is a troubling moral and social phenomenon, even in those countries where it does not present significant legal issues. It gives rise to greater concern in those countries that have granted - or intend to grant legal recognition to homosexual unions, which may include the possibility of adopting children.

"The present Considerations do not contain new doctrinal elements; they seek rather to reiterate the essential points on this question and provide arguments drawn from reason which could be used by Bishops in preparing more specific interventions, appropriate to the different situations throughout the world, aimed at protecting and promoting the dignity of marriage, the foundation of the family, and the stability of society, of which this institution is a constitutive element.

"The present Considerations are also intended to give direction to Catholic politicians by indicating the approaches to proposed legislation in this area which would be consistent with Christian conscience. Since this question relates to the natural moral law, the arguments that follow are addressed not only to those who believe in Christ, but to all persons committed to promoting and defending the common good of society."

### **"I. THE NATURE OF MARRIAGE AND ITS INALIENABLE CHARACTERISTICS.**

The Church's teaching on marriage and on the complementarity of the sexes reiterates a truth that is evident to right reason and recognized as such by all the major cultures of the world. Marriage is not just any relationship between human beings. ... No ideology can erase from the human spirit the certainty that marriage exists solely between a man and a woman, who by mutual personal gift, proper and exclusive to themselves, tend toward the communion of their persons. In this way, they mutually perfect each other, in order to cooperate with God in the procreation and upbringing of new human lives.

"The natural truth about marriage was confirmed by the Revelation contained in the biblical accounts of creation. ... Men and women are equal as persons and complementary as male and female. Sexuality is something that pertains to the physical-biological realm and has also been raised to a new level þ the personal level þ where nature and spirit are united. ... God has willed to give the union of man and woman a special participation in his work of creation. ... Furthermore, the marital union of man and woman has been elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament."

"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. Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law. Homosexual acts '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'."

"Nonetheless, according to the teaching of the Church, men and women with homosexual tendencies 'must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.' They are called, like other Christians, to live the virtue of chastity. The homosexual inclination is however 'objectively disordered' and homosexual practices are 'sins gravely contrary to chastity'."

**"II. POSITIONS ON THE PROBLEM OF HOMOSEXUAL UNIONS.** Faced with the fact of homosexual unions, civil authorities adopt different positions. At times they simply tolerate the phenomenon; at other times they advocate legal recognition of such unions, under the pretext of avoiding, with regard to certain rights, discrimination against persons who live with someone of the same sex. In other cases, they favor giving homosexual unions legal equivalence to marriage properly so-called, along with the legal possibility of adopting children."

"In those situations where homosexual unions have been legally recognized or have been given the legal status and rights belonging to marriage, clear and emphatic opposition is a duty. One must refrain from any kind of formal cooperation in the enactment or application of such gravely unjust laws and, as far as possible, from material cooperation on the level of their application. In this area, everyone can exercise the right to conscientious objection.

### **"III. ARGUMENTS FROM REASON AGAINST LEGAL RECOGNITION OF HOMOSEXUAL UNIONS.**

To understand why it is necessary to oppose legal recognition of homosexual unions, ethical considerations of different orders need to be taken into consideration.

"From the order of right reason. ... Laws in favor of homosexual unions are contrary to right reason because they confer legal guarantees, analogous to those granted to marriage, to unions between persons of the same sex. "

"From the biological and anthropological order. ... Homosexual unions are totally lacking in the biological and anthropological elements of marriage and family which would be the basis, on the level of reason, for granting them legal recognition. Such unions are not able to contribute in a proper way to the procreation and survival of the human race. The possibility of using recently discovered methods of artificial reproduction, beyond involving a grave lack of respect for human dignity, does nothing to alter this inadequacy."

"As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development. This is gravely immoral and in open contradiction to the principle, recognized also in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the best interests of the child, as the weaker and more vulnerable party, are to be the paramount consideration in every case.

"From the social order. Society owes its continued survival to the family, founded on marriage. The inevitable consequence of legal recognition of homosexual unions would be the redefinition of marriage, which would become, in its legal status, an institution devoid of essential reference to factors linked to heterosexuality; for example, procreation and raising children. ... By putting homosexual unions on a legal plane analogous to that of marriage and the family, the State acts arbitrarily and in contradiction to its duties."

"From the legal order. Because married couples ensure the succession of generations and are therefore eminently within the public interest, civil law grants them institutional recognition. Homosexual unions, on the other hand, do not need specific attention from the legal standpoint since they do not exercise this function for the common good."

#### **"IV. POSITIONS OF CATHOLIC POLITICIANS WITH REGARD TO LEGISLATION IN FAVOR**

**OF HOMOSEXUAL UNIONS.** If it is true that all Catholics are obliged to oppose the legal recognition of homosexual unions, Catholic politicians are obliged to do so in a particular way, in keeping with their responsibility as politicians. Faced with legislative proposals in favor of homosexual unions, Catholic politicians are to take account of the following ethical indications.

"When legislation in favor of the recognition of homosexual unions is proposed for the first time in a legislative assembly, the Catholic law-maker has a moral duty to express his opposition clearly and publicly and to vote against it. To vote in favor of a law so harmful to the common good is gravely immoral.

"When legislation in favor of the recognition of homosexual unions is already in force, the Catholic politician must oppose it in the ways that are possible for him and make his opposition known. ... If it is not possible to repeal such a law completely, the Catholic politician ... 'could licitly support proposals aimed at limiting the harm done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality', on condition that his 'absolute personal opposition' to such laws was clear and well known and that the danger of scandal was avoided.

"This does not mean that a more restrictive law in this area could be considered just or even acceptable; rather, it is a question of the legitimate and dutiful attempt to obtain at least the partial repeal of an unjust law when its total abrogation is not possible at the moment."

"CONCLUSION. ... The common good requires that laws recognize, promote and protect marriage as the basis of the family, the primary unit of society. Legal recognition of homosexual unions or placing them on the same level as marriage would mean not only the approval of deviant behavior, with the consequence of making it a model in present-day society, but would also obscure basic values which belong to the common inheritance of humanity. The Church cannot fail to defend these values, for the good of men and women and for the good of society itself."

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