

destructive ideas and behavior of any society, and often those societies resist. Our Christian "tough love" insists that God intends more for us than homosexual activity can ever offer. Our long standing Judeo-Christian tradition is coming under strong attack especially in America. Every young Catholic can expect to feel this pressure --some of it even from dissenters within the Church, some of it from otherwise respected teachers or counselors. If you openly affirm the Church's teaching and ask your friend to question the "gay-positive path, you will likely get labeled "homophobic." It takes courage to speak an unpopular truth, but it's an act of real love. Reaffirm your love to your friend and hold your ground.

#### 9. Generous and Giving People

*"Homosexual activity..., 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 no. 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." CDF, no.7*

What if your actively homosexual friends are otherwise good people? Their sexual activity still works against that goodness, and for friendship's sake and honesty's sake you need to say clearly, at least once, what you believe and why. Apart from that, you can still affirm other good things you see in your friend, as the Church does. And you can still be there for your friend no matter what, and say so. Such loyalty has at times been the life-line for people who deep down didn't want the homosexual identity and life but had been convinced they had no choice in the matter — because they'd never heard anyone say anything different.

#### 10. Always and Totally Compulsive?

*"What is at all costs to be avoided is the unfounded and demeaning assumption that the sexual behavior of homosexual persons is always and*

*totally compulsive and there' fore inculpable." CDF Letter, no. 11*

"I can't stop" is the cry of the addict and it means a person feels that his/her freedom has been taken over by something else. But not all homosexuality is compulsive, especially at first. Some people experiment with homosexual sex just to see if they like it. Sex just for pleasure, however, often leads to sexual addiction -- whether it's heterosexual or homosexual. Catholic teaching reminds us that our free will is God's gift, and anything that controls us is against God's purposes. Some people who were once actively homosexual testify that it didn't take long to become deeply addicted to gay or lesbian sex. Overcoming the addiction was a very difficult, but not impossible, struggle.

#### 11. Abandoning Homosexuality

*"Abandonment of homosexual activity will require a profound collaboration of the individual with God's liberating grace." CDF Letter, no. 11*

Many people experience difficulty in trying to leave the terribly risky homosexual life. Four factors are necessary for success: deep conviction that only chaste living is good, sturdy support from others, total personal effort, and reliance on God. Many people do successfully establish a life of sexual self-control. But are they happy? Popular opinion says, "No!" imagining a never-ending torment of suppressed desire. Not so, say these over-comers. They report instead great happiness and much gratitude to God for being set free at last from the demeaning power of their lust. The result is increased self-confidence and inner peace.

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## Eleven Church Teachings on Homosexuality

*"...an overly benign interpretation was given to the homosexual condition itself, some going so far as to call it neutral, or even good."*

*"Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual People," no.3, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), 1986,*

#### You Need to Know What the Church Teaches

You sometimes hear: "The Church accepts homosexuality as natural and normal," or "The Church condemns homosexuals." To clear up that confusion, this article will quote and comment on eleven statements from a 1986 CDF letter entitled, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual People."

#### 1. Loving and Life-Giving Union

*"The Church... celebrates the divine plan of the loving and life-giving union of men and women in the sacrament of marriage." CDF Letter, no.7*

God created sex for two combined purposes: the happiness of a man and woman uniting in married love, and the happiness of new life being born from that union. Take away either one --for instance with adultery, prostitution, masturbation, premarital sex, or homogenital activity --and sexual activity turns negative and limiting, because those two purposes are built into us. We are made physically for loving and for generating new life. Sexual acts which are anything less than that will separate us from part of our selves and from what God wants for us; they leave out and suppress part of what sex is and part of who we are.

#### 2. A Complementary Sexual Design

*"To choose someone of the same sex for one's*

*sexual activity is to annul [erase] the rich symbolism and meaning not to mention the gods, of the Creator's sexual design. Homosexual activity is not a complementary union able to transmit life..."* CDF Letter; no.7

God's plan for us is to engage the mystery of male and female, travel the distance between the sexes, and unite. Homosexuality uses sex for something other than what the Creator intended. The nature of our bodies requires no elaborate scientific data to prove the obvious fact that our bodies are not made for same-sex union. The Church is saying our hearts aren't either, and so it's not good for us or for our long term happiness and growth. God created us physically and emotionally for "complementary union" and procreation.

### **3. The Homosexual Inclination is Objectively Disordered**

*"Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."* CDF Letter, no.3

Homosexual feelings do arise. Sometimes they're temporary --especially for adolescents --but for some people, homosexual feelings are deep rooted and difficult to overcome. The Church says it's not a sin to have such feelings, but it is an objective disorder, a problem.

It can be difficult to understand what an "objective disorder" is. It means that the very inclination toward a same sex act indicates that the desire itself is moving in the wrong direction; ordinarily the vast majority of men and women have a natural God given attraction toward physical union with a person of the opposite sex. This is natural and good because it leads the majority of people into marriage whereas same sex attractions while not sinful, end up in a disordered act if one gives into them.

It may be objected that a man lusting for a woman is a disordered act, but the inclination to such an act is considered natural but misdirected under ordinary circumstances. Under the circumstance of

marriage however this inclination is good because it leads to strengthening the union between a man and woman and the procreation of a child.

The same-sex feelings do not lead to strengthening the union between a man and woman nor to the procreation of a child therefore they are considered objectively disordered but not sinful in and of themselves.

### **4. Not Morally Acceptable**

*"Therefore special concern and pastoral attention should be directed toward those who have this condition, lest they be led to believe that the living out of this orientation in homosexual activity is a morally acceptable option. It is not .. It is only in the marital relationship that the use of the sexual faculty can be morally good."* CDF Letter, no.3 & 7. The only reason the Church goes to the trouble of calling certain activities morally wrong is that those activities cause real harm. To act on homosexual feelings is to increase their strength. Many who were formerly active in the homosexual life-style report that the temporary sexual pleasure --and this is true of every form of unhealthy sex--left them profoundly empty. On the other hand, when they abstained from illicit sexual activity, even if abstaining was a struggle, they found they experienced greater peace and confidence.

### **5. The Church Calls No One "A Homosexual"**

*"Today, the Church... refuses to consider the person as a "heterosexual "or a "homosexual," and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: the creature of God, and by grace, His child and heir to eternal life."* CDF, no.16

The Church won't put a label on anyone. To say someone is "gay" or "lesbian" or a "homosexual" is to define a whole person by just one aspect. It can lock up a person's identity and block further emotional growth. That's just the sort of labeling which gives rise to prejudice and discrimination. The Church stands against any behavior it calls immoral, but always teaches support and respect for the person. Labeling

limits and disrespects people.

### **6. The Church Condemns Violent Malice**

*"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."* CDF Letter, no.10

Some people despise those who struggle with homosexual attractions. The Church condemns any expressions of that attitude, for instance: anti-gay or anti-lesbian jokes, verbal and physical attack, social exclusion, rejection of friends or family members, avoidance of the topic of homosexuality, and so on. That behavior is all very wrong. It's what the Church calls "a sin against charity." People with homosexual struggles face many challenges. They need love and encouragement, not mistreatment.

### **7. Respect Each Person**

*"The intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action, and in law."* CDF Letter, no.10

When you hear insulting remarks about people who struggle with homosexuality, the Church is saying: Don't stand for it. Speak up. And when a friend or family member confides in you about experiencing homosexual attractions, that's the moment your friendship and Christian response really count. Good friends also challenge one another, so you can and should say what you believe. You can continue to show both Christian love and faithfulness to the Truth, no matter what decision they make.

### **8. Pressure on the Church**

*"...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."* CDF, no.8

One of the Church's toughest duties is to speak the truth with love and confront the self-