

On Always Our Children

Bishop Fabian W. Bruskewitz

Last October 1st, (1998) a document entitled *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children* was published by the Committee on Marriage and the Family of the US. bishops' conference.

Although this document was evidently "approved" by the Administrative Committee of that conference, and it would seem the correct procedures outlined in conference rules were followed, it should be made clear that the document was composed without any input from the majority of the American Catholic bishops, who were given no opportunity whatever to comment on its pastoral usefulness or on its contents.

As almost always happens when such procedures are used by committees of the conference, the illusion is given, perhaps deliberately, and carried forth by the media, to the effect that this is something the U.S. bishops have published, rather than the correct information being conveyed to the public; namely, that most bishops had nothing to do with this undertaking. I believe one would be justified in asserting that in this case, flawed and defective procedures, badly in need of correction and reform, resulted in a very flawed and defective document.

The majority of America's Catholic bishops were allowed nothing to say about this document. Still less were they permitted any suggestions or comments about the "advisers" and consultants used by the committee, who, by their own boasting and the ordinary "rumor mill," have been detected to be people whose qualifications in this area of moral conduct are highly questionable. The document, in a view which is shared by many, is founded on bad advice, mistaken theology, erroneous science and skewed sociology. It is pastorally helpful in no perceptible way. Does this committee intend to issue documents to parents of drug addicts, promiscuous teenagers, adult children involved in canonically invalid marriages, and the like? These are far more numerous than parents of homosexuals. The occasion and the motivation for this document's birth remain hidden in the murky arrangements which brought it forth.

Not only does this document fail to take into account the latest revision in the authentic Latin version of The Catechism of the Catholic Church regarding homosexuality, but it juxtaposes several quotes from the Catechism in order to pretend falsely and preposterously that the Catechism says homosexuality is a gift from God and should be accepted as a fixed and permanent identity. Of course, the document, in order to support the incorrect views it contains, totally neglects to cite the Catholic doctrine set forth by the Holy See which teaches that the homosexual orientation is "objectively disordered." Also, the document's definition

of the virtue and practice of chastity is inadequate and distorted.

The character of this document is such that it would require a book of many pages to point out all its bad features, which sometimes cross the border from poor advice to evil advice. For instance, I believe it is wicked to counsel parents not to intervene, but rather to adopt a "wait and see" attitude when they find their adolescent children "experimenting" with homosexual acts. Parents have a grave moral duty to prevent their children from committing mortal sins when they can. It is certainly and seriously wrong to counsel parents to "accept" their children's homosexual friends. In my view, parents should be vigilant about the friends and companions of their children. Of course, the document deliberately avoids distinguishing minor children from adult children in its advice to parents and seems to delight in this ambiguity, just as it confuses the acceptance of a person who does immoral acts with the acceptance of such a person's immoral behavior.

Sinners are always the object of Christ's love and so they must also be the object of ours. Loving sinners while hating their sins must mark the followers of Christ even when dealing with homosexual people. However, true love is never served by obfuscating the truth as this document appears to do. Homosexual acts, insofar as they are deliberately and freely done, are mortal sins which place a person who does them in the gravest danger of eternal damnation. The document says to parents, "Do not blame

yourselves for a homosexual orientation in your child." Many scientists and psychologists say that the orientation is likely and often due to certain parental defects, which are usually unconsciously present, and proper therapy requires that these matters be confronted. The document claims that something is "the common opinion of experts" when in fact it is no such thing. One critique of this document says that it is really an exercise in homosexual ("gay and lesbian") advocacy. It is difficult not to see it as such.

"Calamity and frightening disaster" are terms which are not too excessive to describe this document. It is my view that this document carries no weight or authority for Catholics, whom I would advise to ignore or oppose it.

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