



Presentation

of Synodal Forum IV

“Life in succeeding relationships

- Living love in sexuality and partnership”

for the Second Reading

at the Fourth Synodal Assembly (8-10 September 2022)

for the implementation text

“A re-evaluation of homosexuality in the Magisterium”

[Result of the ballot in the Forum: 17 Yes, 1 abstention]

Introduction

The foundational text of Synodal Forum IV takes up findings from theology, the human sciences, and the MHG Study, which suggest a change in the positions held in the Magisterium with regard to homosexual people, as set out in the Catechism of the Catholic Church among other places. In order to evolve the Church’s teaching through a re-evaluation of homosexuality, the Synodal Assembly turns to the Pope and recommends him to seek an understanding on this matter within the universal Church.

Motion

The Synodal Assembly recommends that the Pope conduct a clarification and re-evaluation of homosexuality in the Magisterium. The following aspects must be taken into account in this process:

Every human being is created by God with his or her sexuality, and has inalienable dignity by virtue of thus being created. The sexual orientation of every human person is inseparable from him or her. It is not selected, and it is not changeable.

Having been made in God's image, all people deserve respect and empathy, regardless of their sexual orientation. All faithful are obliged to actively address any discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Since a homosexual orientation is part of being a human as created by God, this orientation is not to be judged differently in ethical terms than a heterosexual orientation.

Every person is called to integrate his or her sexuality into his or her way of life. Responsible genital sexuality in relationships with another person is guided by respect for dignity and self-determination, love and fidelity, responsibility for one another, and the specific dimensions of fertility. It takes place in relationships that are intended to be exclusive and permanent. Same-sex sexuality - also practiced in sexual acts - is thus not a sin that separates a person from God, and it is not to be judged as bad in itself. Rather, it is to be measured by the realisation of the aforementioned values.

It therefore follows that:

1. Paragraphs 2357-2359 as well as 2396 (homosexuality and chastity), amongst others, of the Catechism of the Catholic Church should be revised as part of this re-evaluation of homosexuality. Similarly, the relevant passages in the Compendium of the Catechism (2005; No. 492) should be amended. "Homosexual acts" must be deleted from the Compendium's list of "principal sins against chastity".
2. It follows from this re-evaluation that the Church should confess that She has caused people suffering and violated their dignity in many places through Her teaching and practice in relation to homosexuality.
3. Homosexuality is not a disease. So-called "conversion therapies" are therefore to be rejected. They are not medically indicated. Pastoral guidance must respect self-determination and support the integration of sexuality into the individual. No one may be made to believe that their homosexual orientation and its realisation in life are sinful per se.
4. It follows from this re-evaluation of homosexuality that no person should be prevented from taking up church offices and becoming ordained as a priest, and that no person who is in the service of the Church should suffer disadvantages in their career because of having a homosexual orientation.

Reasoning

The re-evaluation of lived homosexuality proposed here embarks on a path that seeks to build bridges between the Church's existing teaching and tradition towards a further development. We see connecting points in the values made strong by the Gospel and by tradition, which are also realised in a same-sex partnership: love, fidelity, mutual responsibility, exclusivity and permanence, as well as - in the broader sense - fertility (foundational text B.5). Pope Francis recently put forward a broader view of fertility in *Amoris Laetitia*, according to which fertility manifests itself not only in biological and generative terms, but for instance also as a contribution to society (AL 178 and 181). In addition, insights from studying the Bible and from

the human sciences help us to broaden and sharpen our view of homosexuality. For example, the recent document entitled *Che cosa è l'uomo?* (What is Man?), published by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, reaches new, nuanced assessments of same-sex sexual acts as they occur in the Bible (*"Che cosa è l'uomo? Un itinerario di antropologia biblica"*, 2019, Nos. 185-195). The state-of-the-art in the human sciences is that homosexuality and bisexuality are not diseases or disorders, and nor are they something that can be chosen. Rather, they are natural minority variants of people's preferences in terms of sexual structures. In common with heterosexuality, these sexual preferences manifest themselves during puberty, and are stable, i.e. not changeable. These findings make a re-evaluation of homosexuality necessary. It is a variant of the norm, and not an "incomplete variant" (foundational text A 2.3). It is part of God's good Creation as a normal case. The same must therefore apply in ethical terms to homosexual people as to heterosexual people.

Homosexual people frequently experience debasement and marginalisation in our Church. Although the current version of the Catechism of the Catholic Church calls for these people to be treated with respect and not to be unfairly demeaned, there are many places in which these commands are not followed, as the sexuality of people of the same sex who love one another, also realised in sexual acts, is still considered a grave sin. This can have serious consequences for homosexual faithful, up to the point of causing danger to life and limb, if Catholic dignitaries, for example, do not adopt an unambiguous position of opposition to the persecution of homosexual people by the State. If loving homosexual relationships are not acknowledged, there is a danger that same-sex desire cannot be integrated into one's own personality. Problems in establishing identity are often the result. Experiencing rejection in the social and pastoral spheres, as well as in Catholic communities, can have negative effects on the mental health of young people in particular.

The so-called "conversion therapies", and similar "offers" that are aggressively promoted by some Catholic groups, are unscientific, and have been proven to have the potential to cause considerable psychological damage, which is why they are expressly banned in some countries. Last but not least, many Catholics working for the Church (laity as well as ordained persons) see their professional livelihoods placed at risk if their sexual orientation and/or same-sex partnership becomes known to their employer (foundational text B.5.5).

The amendments to the Catechism put forward here are based on the realisation that the Church's actions in matters of homosexuality have not sufficiently taken into account the dignity of homosexual people as creatures of God. Homosexual people are children of God, and by virtue of their being made in God's image have a right to be unconditionally accepted in and by our Church, and to play an active role in the life of faith and in the life of the Church.

The hostile attitude adopted by our Church has frequently made it difficult, if not impossible, for homosexual people to be disciples of Jesus in the past.

The taboos and apprehension regarding sexuality in general, and homosexuality in particular, that have arisen from the Church's sexual teaching up to now are systemic causes of the abuse crimes that have been committed in the Church, since they have impeded the development of mature sexuality in many cases, or prevented it altogether. Among other things, this

development is hindered by the fact that homosexuality has been considered an obstacle to ordination in the past. We also see an urgent need for action against this background so that people who are unsettled by the Church's current teaching can integrate their sexuality positively and responsibly into their personality in future.