

Recent Statements from the Pope on Civil Unions By Fr. Dave Heney

There has been some misunderstanding about the Pope's recent comments about homosexual children within families and about homosexual adults living in a committed but chaste relationship. He actually said nothing new. In fact, Pope Benedict said these same ideas almost 20 years ago in a more formal document in 2003.

Pope Francis made some casual remarks over several years that were recently combined together for a new documentary movie. Casual remarks are often misunderstood when taken out of their original context ...and then always by the news media! This is what the Pope said about homosexual children within a family: "They have a right to be a part of their family. They're children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out, or be made miserable because of it."

Children may arrive in the world and grow up with various issues, some physical, some mental, and some moral. Just as Jesus came to save all people through love, families should also strive to love all their children and help them to grow physically, mentally, and morally to become the person God wants them to be. We believe that same sex attraction is a disorder only in the common sense that it is not the normal order, as our many million year history as a human species affirms. Same sex attraction is not a sin, only the behavior of simulating intercourse outside of marriage. There is nothing new here. After all, everyone no matter who they are is called to refrain from sexual intercourse outside of marriage.

The church never condones bad moral behavior but also does everything it can to help the person through love repent and change for the better. The Pope affirms that marriage is always and only between one man and one woman, and that intercourse only belongs within that relationship. He has not changed our view of marriage at all. The Pope also affirms that in no way can our faith acknowledge homosexual behavior or marriage as it is contrary to all of scripture, the words of Jesus, and thousands of years of church teaching that have been faithful to His words.

This is what the Pope said about same-sex couples: “*What we have to create is a civil union law. That way they are legally covered. I stood up for that.*” The pope recognizes that married couples also enjoy many legal benefits from their relationship, such as inheritance laws, hospital visitation rights, tax laws, health insurance benefits, surviving partner inheritance benefits, medical decision-making, and funeral decision-making.

The pope simply affirmed that any two people can use the laws of their state or country to enter into a legal contract to ensure as many of those of helpful benefits as they can, independent of acknowledging any marriage. Our Catholic faith has no problem with these kinds of simple legal agreements.