

[Readings: Exodus 22:20-26; Ps.18; 1 Thess.1:5-10; Matt. 22:34-40]

In a new documentary film that premiered last week in Rome, Pope Francis expressed his support for legal civil unions between same-sex couples. His comments have generated headlines around the globe.

In “Francesco,” a documentary that explores the teachings of Pope Francis, the Holy Father is quoted as saying, “Homosexual people have a right to be in a family. They are children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable over it. What we have to create is a civil union law. That way they are legally covered.” This seems to contradict what the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated back in 2003.

The quotes are the clearest comments to date on the subject of civil unions by Pope Francis, who has previously expressed support of the legal rights of same-sex couples. In a book-length series of conversations with the French sociologist Dominique Wolton, published in 2017, the pope defended the traditional institution of marriage while also signaling his openness to civil unions.

“ ‘Marriage’ is a historical word. Forever, throughout humanity and not only in the Church, it's been between a man and a woman,” the pope said then. “You can't change it just like that. It's the nature of things. That's how they are. So, let's call them ‘civil unions.’ ”

On October 23, 2020, the following memo was sent to all priests from the Department of Communications of the Archdiocese of Detroit regarding Pope Francis' recent comments. It reads:

The Holy Father recently expressed his opinion on a matter of policy in a secular society, specifically in reference to legal protections in same-sex relationships. Archbishop Vigneron, along with the Catholic faithful, awaits further clarity and context from the Vatican.

Pope Francis, in fidelity to his mission to guard the deposit of faith, has constantly given witness to the truth of marriage according to God's plan and the Church's teaching on the Sacrament of Marriage, that it is a sacred and “unbreakable union” between one man and one woman who “are no longer two, but one flesh” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1604).

Further, acts of sexual intimacy outside of marriage as it is established by God are gravely contrary to the virtue of chastity and God's plan for human flourishing (cf. CCC, 2380-2400). In our archdiocese, Archbishop Vigneron joins the Vicar of Peter and all other members of the College of Bishops to affirm these saving teachings of Christ.

As for the experience of same-sex attraction, it was addressed recently by Archbishop Vigneron in his 2019 pastoral note, [*Imitating Christ's Charity and Chastity*](#). The archbishop proclaimed Christ's "unfathomable, unsurpassable and invincible love" for people who experience same-sex attraction and affirmed their share in the mission of the whole Church to "hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to put faith and trust in him, and to give witness to the beauty and goodness of a life lived as his new creation." This ends the memo from the Archdiocese.

As Catholics and secular media outlets continue to discuss the comments made by Pope Francis, other bishops across the country have released statements to help put the pope's remarks into their proper context for their confused flocks.

Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco said in a statement that the Holy Father clearly differentiated between a civil arrangement, which accords mutual benefits to two people, and marriage. The former, (the pope) said, can in no way be equated to marriage, which remains unique," Archbishop Cordileone said.

This is what the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith said in 2003: *11. The Church teaches that respect for homosexual persons cannot lead in any way to approval of homosexual behavior or to legal recognition of homosexual unions.*

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.

The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, in the Audience of March 28, 2003, approved the

present Considerations, adopted in the Ordinary Session of this Congregation, and ordered their publication.

Rome, from the Offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 3, 2003, Memorial of Saint Charles Lwanga and his Companions, Martyrs.

And finally, from today's Gospel:

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a scholar of the law tested him by asking,

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

He said to him,

"You shall love the Lord, your God,

with all your heart,

with all your soul,

and with all your mind.

This is the greatest and the first commandment.

The second is like it:

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

What would Jesus do? What would Jesus say? AMEN