

As the CDF puts it, 'The inevitable consequence of legal recognition of homosexual unions would be the redefinition of marriage, which would become in its legal status an institution devoid of essential reference to factors linked to heterosexuality; for example, procreation and rearing children' (*Considerations*, n. 8).

Today, some invoke the principle of personal autonomy or freedom to justify the legal recognition of homosexual couples. While the civil rights of individuals with same-sex attraction should be affirmed, there is no reason why same-sex unions should receive special benefits from the state because such unions do not contribute to the common good, as does marriage.

*Considerations*, by the CDF, points out that 'there are good reasons for holding that such unions are harmful to the proper development of human society, especially if their impact on society were to increase' (*ibid.*). As persons, we live in society and are meant to make a contribution to the common good. Married couples do just that by rearing and educating their children.

Because married couples contribute to the succession of generations by family life, and in this way contribute to the common good of the community, civil law has traditionally granted them institutional recognition. Same-sex couples, however, do not need specific attention from a legal standpoint since they do not exercise this function for the common good (cf. *Considerations*, n. 9).

### Isn't the prohibition of same-sex 'marriage' merely a Christian teaching?

No. This issue relates to the natural moral law, so the CDF's arguments are addressed not only to persons who believe in Christ, but to all persons who care about the common good of society. What the Church teaches on marriage and the complementarity of the sexes should be clear to human reason. Traditionally defined as one man and one woman coming into a union of one flesh, marriage is recognised by all the major cultures of the world. Marriage is not only a relationship between human beings; it was established by the Creator with its own nature, essential properties, and purposes.

Although it can be blinded by bad philosophy or bad choices, the human spirit naturally knows the truth that marriage exists solely between a man and a woman, joined together in a union of bodily persons expressing their love with the hope of children and family. One does not need texts from Holy Scripture to recognise the institution of marriage and its overriding importance for the common good of the whole human race. Something which is contrary to the natural moral law is objectively wrong – regardless of one's particular religious beliefs or opinions.

### What about same-sex couples adopting children?

In *Considerations*, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith clearly states that homosexual adoption does violence to the child, who is deprived of the experience of normal development in an intact marriage of man and woman as mother and father:

As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development. This is gravely immoral and in open contradiction to the principle, recognised also in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the best interests of the child, as the weaker and more vulnerable party, are to be the paramount consideration in every case. (n. 7)

On May 2, 2005, a few days after a meeting with Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, condemned homosexual 'marriage' and adoption in an interview with the *Fides* News Agency. When questioned about allowing same-sex couples to adopt children, he replied: 'This would destroy the child's future; it would be an act of moral violence against the child.' Later he added, 'When he [the child] grows up and becomes an adult, how tragic it will be for him to let his friends know that his "parents" are two women or two men' (*The Wanderer*, May 12, 2005, pp. 1-2).

This position is supported by Maggie Gallagher and Joshua K. Baker in their article 'Do Moms and Dads Matter? Evidence from the Social Sciences on Family Structure and the Best Interests of the Child' (In *Margins: Maryland's Law Journal on Race, Religion, Gender and Class* (2004), pp. 161-80). Gallagher and Baker point out that in the last thirty years 'literally tens of thousands of studies evaluating the consequences of marriage have been conducted in various disciplines... As a group, these studies point to powerful advantages of intact marriages of a mother and a father for children' (*ibid.*, p. 165).

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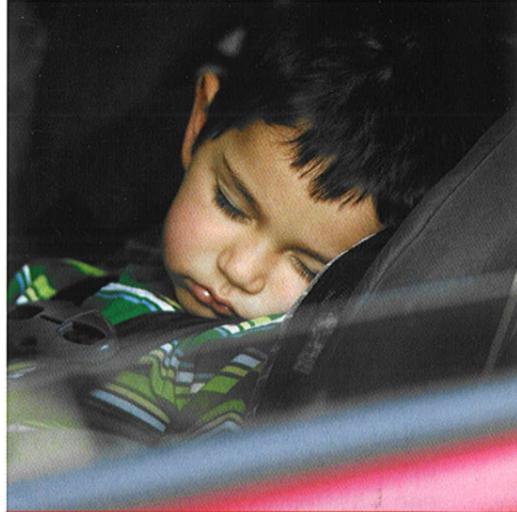


**Homosexuality and the Catholic Church - Clear Answers to Difficult Questions**  
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Gerard J.M. Van Den Aardweg, Ph.D.



Homosexual adoption does violence to the child, who is deprived of the experience of normal development in an intact marriage of man and woman as mother and father.

### Questions for discussion

1. The author prefers to refer to 'persons with same-sex attraction' rather than to 'gays', 'lesbians' or 'homosexuals'. What is the difference and why is it important?
2. Why is it so important to treat people with same-sex attraction with the same respect as anyone else?
3. How would you explain to a friend why the legalisation of same-sex 'marriage' would not be a good thing?
4. What is wrong with allowing same-sex couples to adopt a child?

Fr John F. Harvey, OSFS, (1918-2010) held a master's degree in psychology and a doctorate in moral theology from the Catholic University of America. At the request of Terence Cardinal Cooke, Fr Harvey became the first director of *Courage* in 1980. The author of several books, including *The Homosexual Person* (Ignatius, 1987), *The Truth About Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful* (Ignatius, 1996), *Same-Sex Attraction: A Parents' Guide* (St Augustine Press, 2003), *The Moral Theology of the Confessions of Saint Augustine* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2008) and the K of C pamphlet, 'Same Sex Attractions: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice' (2007). Fr Harvey gave counsel and guidance to persons with same-sex attraction and their parents for more than fifty years.

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# INFORM

Faith & Life Matters



Difficult questions on

# HOMOSEXUALITY

# and GAY 'MARRIAGE'

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Fr John Harvey, OSFS, (1918-2010) founder of *Courage* was a priest with over fifty years of experience counselling persons with same-sex attraction. In this article, he sheds light on a sensitive issue.

## How is homosexuality defined?

Traditionally, homosexuality (or same-sex attraction) has been described as a *persistent* and *predominant* attraction of a sexual-genital nature to persons of one's own sex. The term 'persistent' is used to indicate that such erotic feelings toward someone of the same sex have persisted beyond adolescence. The term 'predominant' is used to indicate that there may be a lesser degree of erotic interest in the other sex.

It may happen that a person has a predominant attraction to persons of his own sex and a weaker attraction to persons of the other sex, or that he has a predominant attraction to persons of the other sex and a weaker attraction to persons of his own sex. The vast majority of men and women, however, about ninety-eight percent, have a strong physical attraction to members of the other sex and no significant physical attraction to their own (cf. J.F. Harvey, OSFS, *The Homosexual Person* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), pp. 27-30).

When an adult person perceives that his persistent, predominant attractions are toward members of his own sex, he may regard himself as having same-sex attraction. This does not mean that he will always have such attraction. Contemporary research indicates that some individuals do regain their heterosexual inclinations, about one out of three adults, but the majority remain with homosexual inclinations.

### I notice you use 'same-sex attraction' rather than the popular terms 'gay' or 'lesbian'. Is this intentional?

Yes. I avoid using the terms 'gay' and 'lesbian' for good reason. An individual is more than a sexual inclination. An individual is a *person*, a creature made in the image and likeness of God, with intelligence and free will, destined for eternal life, and when baptised, a brother or sister of Christ. To refer to him or her as a 'homosexual' is to reduce that person to a sexual tendency. A human being is far more than that in the mystery of his or her personhood.

The terms 'gay' and 'lesbian' are an even further reduction of a person's own wondrous complexity. Those who refer to themselves as 'gay' or 'lesbian' regard their sexual attraction as the most important mark of their identity. Far from being a merely academic question, how you regard yourself as a person has much to do with how you see yourself and how you set your personal goals for the future. Your self-image greatly influences your behaviour.

The difficulty with labelling oneself is that it restricts one's options and vision. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's letter *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*



makes this point very well: 'Today the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person as "heterosexual" or "homosexual," and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: creature of God, and by his grace, his child and heir to eternal life' (n. 16).

### What causes same-sex attraction?

Dr Elizabeth Moberly holds that a homosexual orientation 'does not depend on a genetic dispositional hormonal imbalance or abnormal learning processes, but on difficulties in the parent-child relationship, especially in the early years of life' (E. Moberly, *Homosexuality: A New Christian Ethic* (Cambridge, England: James Clarke, 1983), p. 2). While admitting the complexity of homosexual phenomena, Moberly singles out one underlying principle: that the homosexual man or woman suffers from a deficit in his or her relationship with the parent of the same sex, and that there is a corresponding drive to make good this deficit through the medium of same-sex or homosexual relationships. The term 'deficit' refers to an inadequacy due to some kind of trauma that has destroyed the natural attachment to the same-sex parent, leaving the child unfulfilled in his or her need for same-sex attachment. It does not imply any wilful neglect or maltreatment of the child by the parent of the same sex.

As the child represses his or her normal need for attachment to the parent of his or her own sex, the opposite drive for restoration of the attachment is strengthened. This defensive detachment, coupled with the urge for renewed attachment, results in a condition of same-sex ambivalence.

Homosexual persons thus have both *attraction to* and *hostility toward* persons of the same sex. The media refers to 'same-sex love' (meaning same-sex attraction), but does not mention the animosity found at the beginning of same-sex attraction. For example, a seven-year-old boy notices the brutality of his father toward his mother and toward himself. He therefore makes a vow to separate himself from his father, a process known as *defensive detachment*. But the boy still yearns for another older male person, i.e., for a father. Defensive detachment from one's father is followed by same-sex

attraction to members of his own sex, preferably older men. Moberly discovered this ambivalence in years of research at Cambridge University in England on the early relationships of children.

### Are there specific texts from Holy Scripture that refer to same-sex (i.e., homosexual) acts?

Yes – and in all such texts, homosexual acts are condemned. The *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, cites the following passages: Gen 19:4-11 (concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah for homosexual behaviour), Lev 18:22, 20:13 (condemning sodomy as an abomination), and Rom 1:18-32 (condemning male and female homosexual acts). In the new context of the confrontation between Christianity and the pagan society of his day, St Paul uses homosexual behaviour as an example of the blindness which has overcome mankind. For example, see 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, in which Paul teaches that those who commit homosexual acts shall not enter the kingdom of God, and 1 Timothy 1:9-10, in which he repeats the warning given in 1 Corinthians. In Romans 1:26, female same-sex acts are also specifically condemned.

### Do recent official Church documents teach the immorality of homosexual acts?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states the Church's definitive position on homosexual activity:

Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved (CCC 2357).

As I note in my book *The Truth about Homosexuality*, the teachings of *Gaudium et Spes*, *Humanae Vitae*, and the *Catechism*, among others, show 'that there are two inseparable purposes in the marital act: the permanent union of man and woman and the procreation of children' (p. 124).

'Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.' *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2359

The moral argument against homosexual activity, then, 'flows directly from the revealed teaching on marriage, namely, that the two purposes of human sexual activity are the permanent union of husband and wife and the procreation of children – two purposes inseparably connected. Since homosexual activity cannot achieve either of these purposes, it must be immoral by its very nature' (Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 304).

### Can a distinction be made between a homosexual inclination and homosexual acts?

Yes, though many individuals with same-sex attraction insist that the inclination to homosexual acts and the behaviour cannot be separated. These individuals often believe that they were born with this inclination and that it is natural to them and therefore ought to be expressed with someone of their own sex in homosexual acts. (Note that the inclination to homosexual acts is not sinful in itself, unless one freely consents to these desires.) Having become *addicted* to homosexual acts, they believe that they cannot control their sexual desires. Even if some have come to admit that there is a distinction between inclinations and acts, many still believe that they are incapable of controlling such desires. One notices a similar despair in the situation of alcoholics and those addicted to pornography.

Throughout many years of pastoral practice, I have never met anyone who chose to have a homosexual inclination. For this reason, the Church calls this inclination an 'objective disorder.' The inclination is 'objective' in the sense that it develops in the psychological makeup of the individual, and it is a 'disorder' because if one yields to these desires, one commits an act which is a serious violation of the law of God because homosexual acts are not, and can never be, in accord with the intent of the Creator of human sexuality. To sum up, the inclination to same-sex desires is not a sin, but it makes the practice of chastity more difficult.

### So are people with same-sex attraction responsible for their behaviour?

We must always distinguish objective morality from the responsibility of the person giving consent to such desires and acts. Previously, we have seen the arguments from both the Old and New Testaments which demonstrate that the objective criterion for the exercise of sexuality is the state of marriage. This led to the conclusion that all other genital acts, including homosexual acts, are immoral. The point was further developed that the natural moral law supports the thesis of Holy Scripture that acts of intercourse may take place only in the state of marriage. From both Holy Scripture and natural moral law we draw the conclusion that homosexual acts are always, by their very nature, seriously immoral.

When we turn, however, to the person who has same-sex attraction, we are considering his personal responsibility for his acts. How

much freedom does a person with same-sex tendencies have to avoid consent to homosexual lust? In most cases, he has sufficient freedom, buttressed by grace, to avoid consent to such lustful desires and acts. Where there is sufficient freedom, there is likewise responsibility.

In this regard, heterosexual persons should be very careful not to make harsh judgments about persons with same-sex attraction. From many years of working with such persons, I have come to see that many environmental factors contribute to their lapse into a homosexual way of living. Through the help of God, many persons who began their adult lives in homosexual activity have now come to learn how to live chastely. Moral theologians, in their analysis of this question, are aware of the many factors which reduce human freedom and consequently may lessen the culpability of such persons.

### If the homosexual condition is objectively disordered, how should we treat people with same-sex attraction?

The *Catechism* is very clear that we should always treat them with the greatest respect and sensitivity, as we would treat anyone else. The *Catechism* says:

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfil God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition (CCC 2358).

### What is the official teaching of the Catholic Church on same-sex 'marriage'?

In an address by Pope Benedict XVI to the Ecclesial Congress of the Diocese of Rome in June 2005, the Holy Father referred to the 'different present forms of the dissolution of marriage as well as free unions and "trial marriage", including the pseudo-marriage between persons of the same sex.' The pope added that these forms of marriage are 'expressions of an anarchic freedom that appears erroneously as man's authentic liberation' (*Zenit* News Agency, 9 June 2005). In short, the Church officially condemns the recent efforts of the legislature in several countries to give legitimacy to so-called 'same-sex marriages'.

### Where is the Church's teaching on same-sex 'marriages' spelled out?

Church teaching on this issue is found especially in the document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) entitled *Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons*, dated June 3, 2003. The document is concerned with the response of the Catholic



Church in particular countries to so-called 'gay rights' legislation. It confronts same-sex unions and so-called gay 'marriages', and we will examine it in detail to learn what it teaches us about true marriage. It is interesting that the Holy See refuses to use the term 'gay marriage' because in no way is a same-sex union a true marriage.

### How dangerous would the acceptance of same-sex 'marriage' be to the institution of marriage?

Before proceeding further, we need to put this problem in context. The disintegration of marriage in the United States and throughout Europe has been going on for several decades and has many faces – such as contraception, no-fault divorce, cohabitation, adultery, same-sex unions, and now gay 'marriage.' Gerard Bradley, professor of law at the University of Notre Dame, states that in comparison with abortion, which is 'the greatest injustice in American society ... the late twentieth-century disintegration of marriage is more epoch-defining and more hazardous to a person's moral health. The question of legally recognising same-sex marriage – thrust upon us by recent court decisions – culminates this disintegration' ('Same-Sex Marriage: The End of Marriage?', *Catholic Dossier*, Mar-Apr 2001, p. 36).

The duty of government is to protect and defend marriage as an institution essential to the common good. Society owes its continued survival to the family, which is founded on marriage.



The homosexual man or woman suffers from a deficit in his or her relationships with the parent of the same sex, and there is a corresponding drive to make good this deficit through the medium of same-sex or homosexual relationships.