

CATHOLIC SEXUAL CONVERSATIONS IN A DIVERSE CHURCH



THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT

Global Network of Rainbow Catholics
Theological Committee

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www.rainbowcatholics.org

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INTRODUCTION

The Theological Committee of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics, made up of theologians from six countries and various identities and in consultation with advisors, aims to name and nurture the richness of LGBTIQ+ Catholic realities. We undertake theological reflection on these questions and experiences that will support and enhance the faith, identities, and belonging of GNRC groups, their members, and Catholics worldwide.

Catholics need and rejoice in a fresh chapter of sexual ethics and theological reflection including both new methods and new content that are rooted in contemporary experiences and sources.

In many places, LGBTIQ+ experiences have been celebrated in creative liturgies, as well as in secular rituals. We affirm the importance of such blessings in Catholic settings and gather such rich and diverse examples for future sharing.

We offer these new tools for conversation and action as gifts to the Catholic community and to the wider world. Used by many people in diverse settings, we hope that these resources will be embraced as Catholic contributions to healthy, safe, consensual, and mutual sexual behaviors which are both a human right and a divine intention. We give and receive blessings abundant from this deep store of love

NEW METHODS

Sex and gender are aspects of anthropology that undergird efforts to reach human maturity and achieve the common good through the many ways people are created and develop. We focus on the contemporary lives of millions of people that mirror divine love. We draw on the richness of Catholic philosophical and theological traditions insofar as they illuminate and connect with the best social and biological scientific data. Our purpose is to open conversations about and propose ethical norms that reflect the needs of a complex world. To that end, we suggest concrete methodological changes:



1. Rejoice in Divine Wisdom as an on-going gift that grounds and necessitates the development of theological thinking and teaching.



2. Embrace human experience, created and creative, which is of God and with God.



3. Seek to understand the variety and complexity of human experience using the best practices in the social sciences and the deepest insights of world religions and spiritualities in the development of a reality-based anthropology.



4. Assume that human beings of all sexual orientations, characteristics, and gender identities have the same rights and responsibilities.



5. Contribute to the development of Catholic social and theological reflection and practice by demonstrating how values of love and justice are brought to bear in intimate relationships, social organization, and laws.



6. Proclaim this new Catholic sexual wisdom as an evolutionary process, not a static product; an invitation, not a set of rules; a community effort, not a fiat.

NEW CONTENT

New methods open up new content as Catholics and others seek spiritual wisdom to ground and guide ethics. Emerging scientific evidence of the variety and fluidity of LGBTIQ+ life experiences requires changes in basic Catholic assumptions about how to live with integrity. We seek not to counter or tinker with institutional church teachings but to propose a realistic basis on which to move forward. We recognize human beings as protagonists of and co-creators with the Divine of their own lives and relationship stories. We assume that healthy communities respect and encourage their members to live core Christian values of love and justice with ever-widening and deepening reach. Given this framework, we offer some basic guidelines:



1. Love is love and justice is justice

Myriad human experiences of healthy, safe, consensual, and mutual love relationships are part of the goodness of creation. Catholic understandings of justice require that people who live these many experiences, with a preferential option for those who have been marginalized, be afforded social and spiritual support in order to flourish.



2. Marriage and family

Expanding the legal and religious parameters of marriage and family is a work in progress throughout the world. Catholic theology in general has only begun to consider these questions. Our Catholic community is capable of leading the way to useful new ways of thinking given the anthropological reality of same-sex love. Sacramental celebration is available for all who wish to affirm their covenants in marriage, and other forms of unions. All loving relationships are blessed as a sign to the world that love is love. Children deserve special attention as they and their parents/caregivers are embraced into welcoming communities.



3. Multiple Sources

Theo-ethical wisdom emerges from many sources. We recognize not only Divine Wisdom and human experience but also insights from the social and biological sciences. We rely on the arts, especially literature, films, music, and the fine arts as windows into the human soul. We recognize and value religious input from traditions other than our own. We reverence the insights of humanists and those who profess no faith. These glimpses of goodness are all part of the shaping of 'catholic' morals in a diverse world.



4. Recognition of human failings

The reality of human fallibility—we all make mistakes—compels us to think anew about how to deal with reconciliation, forgiveness, absolution, divorce, and violence. These are difficult relational problems for which pastoral accompaniment is crucial. Providing such care grounded in the multiple realities of our world is part of contemporary ministry to which all have a fundamental right. Anything less is simply not fulfilling the needs of the whole community.



5. Role of Catholics in global conversation on sexual ethics

The rich Catholic ethical tradition of which this work is a part can be very helpful in global conversations about sexual ethics. The perspective changes from 'What is the Church hierarchy saying?' to 'What gifts do LGBTIQ+ persons bring to the world and the Church?' and 'What is the Holy Spirit telling the Catholic community through the stories of LGBTIQ+ people?' What if we start seeing our personal stories as "the Church speaking"? Such offerings are made with humility. It is in this spirit that we Catholic theologians join the dialogue with much to learn as well as much to give.

CONCLUSION

This Committee offers these reflections as a starting point for discussion. We invite people to use them as points of departure for conversations that will clarify and continue to enrich moral life in communities. The very act of engaging one another, even when we disagree, is part of being protagonists of our own faith. We wish abundant blessings on these efforts to enhance the Catholic moral tradition and bring about a revolution of love and justice.



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