

GNRC Theological Committee
CATHOLIC SEXUAL CONVERSATIONS IN A DIVERSE CHURCH
Mary E. Hunt 6.25.21

Thank you to the GNRC Board, Ruby, and especially to my colleagues on the Theological Committee for our collective work on this statement. As Martin Pendergast has expressed so well, what we are launching today is an invitation to faith communities around the world and others to engage in theological conversations about issues related to sex and gender. We invite people to set the agenda, to ask questions that emerge from daily life in which same-sex love is valued simply as love.

We invite everyone to read the statement, engage it, and become part of the conversation, the theologizing process.

Our statement is divided into two parts, method and content. Without a change in the way we **do** theology, it's method, there can be very little change in content. We have learned this after decades of solid scholarship being ignored by many theologians and most Vatican officials. We value the experiences of healthy, good, natural, and holy love among LGBTIQ+ people which are routinely dismissed in theological discourse. As Black lesbian feminist from the U.S. Audre Lorde wrote in 1984, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house." In our case, this means that the old ways of doing theology among a tiny, elite, largely out of touch sector of the Catholic community by repeating and debating outdated sources will never bring about the changes needed to build robust, inclusive, and safe communities.

Our method begins by rejoicing in Divine Wisdom, the on-going revelation which we receive gratefully. We embrace human experiences as creative and created, and seek to understand the diversity and variety among us using the very best social scientific tools and insights from the world's religions. *We assume equality of rights and responsibilities among all Catholics.* We do not ask for or apologize for equality; we take equality for granted as our starting point.

Our method of inviting conversations based on myriad contexts is a way to shift the theological focus away from negative judgements and toward affirmation of core Christian values of love and justice lived out in many ways around the world. We share this Catholic sexual wisdom as an ongoing process, not a finished product; an invitation, not a new stone tablet; a team effort, and all are on the team, not something imposed by fiat.

Using this method, we offer some basic guidelines. First, love is love and justice is justice for one and all. As Catholics we have a preferential option for those who have been marginalized, especially now our trans siblings. Second, marriage and family are emerging, evolving forms of human community for which blessings for everyone are welcome and the wellbeing of children is primary.

Third, we rely on many sources, including the sciences, arts, and other religious traditions for understanding and evaluating the moral goodness of relationships. Fourth, we recognize that human beings, all of us, have failings so we are keen to rethink reconciliation, absolution, divorce, and violence so as to provide quality pastoral care to everyone. Finally, we see ourselves in the rich line of Catholic moral theology, inviting ethical conversations in many

regions. We do not ask what the hierarchy is teaching, but what the Holy Spirit may be saying through the lives and loves of LGBTIQ+ people.

We begin to engage one another in this new conversation. We are synodal by design, not by decree. We look forward to hearing how various groups utilize this resource, how groups build out their own ethics and pastoral practices. These new insights are not in opposition to outmoded institutional teachings, but founded on the spirit-filled experiences of faithful people trying to live in right relation with one another, with the Divine, and with all of creation.

Please share your wisdom through GNRC. We on the Theological Committee welcome you to the conversation. We need you. We appreciate your interest and await your insights with gratitude. Together with all who wish to join their voices and their listening with ours, we act as church.

Alleluia!