

**Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D.**  
**A Clarification**  
**3 November 2020**



Certain attempts to distort remarks by the Bishop of Rome contained in a “documentary” directed by Evgeny Afineevsky have prompted some to suggest that there has been a change in the teaching of the Church regarding the Sixth and Ninth Commandments.

Consequently, the Secretariat of State of the Holy See has offered some observations to permit an adequate understanding of his words:

More than a year ago, in the course of an interview, Pope Francis responded to two distinct questions at different moments that, in the said documentary, were edited and published as a single response without the necessary context, which has resulted in confusion. The Holy Father, first and foremost, referred in a pastoral manner to the need, within the family, for a son or daughter with a homosexual orientation never to be the object of discrimination. The following words are intended in this sense: “Las personas homosexuales tienen derecho a estar en familia; son hijos de Dios, tienen derecho a una familia. No se puede echar de la familia a nadie ni hacerle la vida imposible por eso.” [Homosexual persons have the right to be in a family. They are sons {and daughters} of God and have the right to a family. You cannot throw anyone out of the family and you cannot make life impossible for them because of it {their inclination}]

The following passage from the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on love in the family *Amoris laetitia* (2016) can shed light on these comments: “During the Synod, we discussed the situation of families whose members include persons who experience same-sex attraction, a situation not easy either for parents or for children. We would like before all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while ‘every sign of unjust discrimination’ is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence. Such families should be given respectful pastoral guidance, so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God’s will in their lives. (n. 250).

A subsequent question of that interview pertained rather to a local law some ten years ago in Argentina regarding «matrimonios igualitarios de parejas del mismo sexo» [“equivalent marriages of same-sexed couples”] and regarding the opposition of the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires to that concept. Pope Francis affirmed in this respect that «es una incongruencia hablar de matrimonio homosexual» [it is an incongruity to speak about homosexual marriage], adding that in the same precise context, he spoke about the right of these persons to have legal coverage: «lo que tenemos que hacer es una ley de convivencia civil; tienen derecho a estar cubiertos legalmente. Yo defendí eso». [what we must do is make a law of cohabitation; they have the right to be covered legally. I defended this].

During an interview in 2014 the Bishop of Rome expressed himself in this way: “Matrimony is between a man and a woman. Secular States want to justify civil unions in order to regulate economic matters between persons, for example assuring health care. This relates to various forms of cohabitation agreements, whose different forms I would not know how to list. The different situations must be examined and evaluated according to their different circumstances.”

It is, therefore, evident that Pope Francis was referring to specific governmental determinations and certainly not to the doctrine of the Church, which has been reiterated in numerous occasions over the years.

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It is propitious to remember that love and respect for those with homosexual inclinations are part of the teaching of the Catholic Church, clearly reiterated in the Catechism (nos. 2357, 2358, 2359). They should never be the object of hatred, persecution, or mistreatment. The call to virtue and holiness of life excludes no one.

It is, therefore, also useful to remember that the Church teaches through official documents with degrees of importance that vary. She does not issue official teachings in interviews, off-the-cuff remarks on airplanes, or even in merged statements in “documentaries.”