

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, J.C.D. Statement on the  
Proposed 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' Legislation (01.VI.10)



In a response to a request from the Chiefs of Chaplains of the Armed Forces I communicated some considerations and concerns regarding the proposal to change the existing legislation regarding persons with a homosexual orientation in the military. In fulfilling my role as the chief shepherd of Catholics in the United States Armed Forces, I have had the opportunity of visiting many installations in the recent past. A number of chaplains and commanding officers have expressed concerns about the effects of a change. There is a request for guidance. The teaching of the Catholic Church is clearly expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

2357 Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity,<sup>140</sup> tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."<sup>141</sup> 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.

2358 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 fulfill 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.

2359 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.

Consequently, those with a homosexual orientation can expect respect and treatment worthy of their human dignity. The prohibitions regarding sexual harassment and intimidation refer just as much to homosexuals as to anyone else.

However, unions between individuals of the same gender resembling marriage will not be accepted or blessed by Catholic chaplains. Furthermore no restrictions or limitations on the teaching of Catholic morality can be accepted. First Amendment rights regarding the free exercise of religion must be respected.

This means that Catholic chaplains must show compassion for persons with a homosexual orientation, but can never condone—even silently—homosexual behavior. A change might have a negative effect on the role of the chaplain not only in the pulpit, but also in the classroom, in the barracks, and in the office.

A more fundamental question, however, should be raised. What exactly is the meaning of a change? No one can deny that persons with a homosexual orientation are already in the military. Does the proposed change authorize these individuals to engage in activities considered immoral not only by the Catholic Church, but also by many other religious groups? Will there be changes in the living conditions, especially in the AOR? There is no doubt that morality and the corresponding good moral decisions have an effect on unit cohesion and the overall morale of the troops and effectiveness of the mission. This Archdiocese exists to serve those who serve and it assists them by advocating moral behavior. The military must find ways to promote that behavior and develop strong prohibitions against any immoral activity that would jeopardize morale, good morals, unit cohesion and every other factor that weakens the mission. So also must a firm effort be made to avoid any injustices that may inadvertently develop because individuals or groups are put in living situations that are an affront to good common sense.

I think that those questions require an adequate response. The effect of a repeal of the current legislation has the potential of being enormous and overwhelming. Nothing should be changed until there is certainty that morale will not suffer. Sacrificing the moral beliefs of individuals or their living conditions to respond to merely political considerations is neither just nor prudent especially for the armed forces at a time of war. Catholics believe that nothing will be done if there is a careful and prudent evaluation of the effects of a change.

For years, those struggling with alcoholism have benefitted from Alcoholics Anonymous. Like homosexuality, there is rarely a cure. There is a control through a process, which is guarded by absolute secrecy. It is an equivalent to “Don’t ask don’t tell”. The process has worked well for some time without the charge that it is discriminatory.

The Archdiocese for the Military Services—the only jurisdiction charged with the pastoral care of all Catholics in the military, VA Administration, and at the service of the Federal Government outside of the boundaries of the United States, which is also charged with endorsing Roman Catholic priests urges the Congress not to repeal the current policy for the Armed Forces.

Archbishop Timothy Broglio

Archbishop for the Military Services USA