

# VATICAN STANCE ON GAY UNIONS ANGERS CRITICS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on reaction to the Vatican document on gay unions:

The Catholic Church's chief doctrinal office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a statement on March 15 making it clear that the Church does not approve of gay unions or gay marriage. This was done with the approval of Pope Francis.

This has not set well with those Catholics who have been at war with the Church's teachings on sexuality. The German bishops, in particular, are not happy with the document. They have steadily been moving toward a Protestant church for some time, and this may force them to decide whether they really belong in the Catholic Church.

On March 16, a group of dissident priests in Austria, the Parish Priest Initiative, pledged to bless gay unions—in open defiance of the Vatican—beckoning a showdown with Rome. In the U.S., so-called progressive Catholics are also angry with the Vatican's position, but then again they have been for decades.

It is important to remember that there is nothing fundamentally new about this statement: it reaffirms the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage. Nonetheless, it is being received in some quarters as very controversial, owing in large part to the welcoming approach that Pope Francis has exhibited to homosexuals. In fairness to the pope, it is not his fault that some interpret his friendly stance as signifying an interest in changing Church doctrine. That's their problem.

To put it differently, it is one thing to say all persons possess equal dignity in the eyes of God; it is quite another

to say that whatever they do is acceptable to God. Human status and human behavior are not identical.

Also, this document applies equally to heterosexuals. According to Catholic sexual ethics, cohabiting men and women are involved in an illicit relationship, and this statement is very clear about their status. Yet the media have missed this point, so absorbed are they with gay rights.

Many news stories on this Vatican statement are citing surveys that say a majority of Catholics approve of gay marriage. That may be true, especially of non-practicing Catholics, but it is nonetheless deceiving.

There is a difference between a preference and a demand. How many of those Catholics who are okay with gay marriage are incensed that the Church has not changed its teaching? Practically none.

What if the subject were corporal punishment in the schools? If a majority of Catholics favored it, should the bishops ratify their choice?

This begs the question: Should the Catholic Church align its teachings to mirror survey results, or should it align its teachings to mirror Scripture? In other words, should the Church make it a priority to follow what the public desires, or should it follow God's law?

The Vatican statement reaffirming the Church's opposition to gay unions and gay marriage concludes by noting, "the Church does not have, and cannot have, the power to bless unions of persons of the same sex."

To put it differently, the Church cannot change Scripture, and indeed has no interest in trying to do so. Its allegiance is to the pursuit of truth, not public opinion.