

November 22, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

+JMJ

In late October, a documentary was published about the Pope in the Spanish language. In the documentary interview it appeared that Pope Francis expressed his support for same-sex unions. I've had many people in one way or another make known to me their dismay and confusion about the media's reporting of Pope Francis' words. Here is some clarification that I hope helps. Bishop Thomas published a statement that included the following paragraphs:

From Pope Francis' words, one can gather his desire to emphasize that persons with homosexual tendencies should not be disowned, but should be treated with respect and dignity in their families. The Holy Father is reaffirming the teaching of the Catholic Church that persons with homosexual tendencies: "must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided" (Catechism of the Catholic Church #2358).

In the documentary film, Pope Francis discussed "a law of civil coexistence" (*una ley de una convivencia civil*) for persons of homosexual orientation. While open to varying interpretations, this statement does not change the teaching of Jesus and his Church on the nature of marriage. Pope Francis, both as a bishop and as pope, has consistently emphasized that marriage should be exclusively defined as the life-long partnership between one man and one woman.

Catholics and non-Catholics alike should understand that unscripted comments expressed by a pope in a media interview for a film are not an official and authoritative exercise of the papal teaching office. The pope's recent comments should be weighed within the context of prior official papal and Magisterial teachings, avoiding the spread of misinformation, misinterpretation of settled Church teaching, and misleading headlines.

Then the Vatican itself made a clarification, after speaking with the creator of the documentary: In a nutshell, the words of Pope Francis were in fact taken from two different parts of the interview, and Pope Francis was answering two distinct questions; yet the editor of the documentary spliced them together to make them look like one statement. Also, the Pope stated explicitly in the interview that there is a conflict here with Church teaching; but the documentary did not include that statement of the Pope. So, Pope Francis' words ended up sounding contrary to Church teaching. As a result, the popular media went wild reporting that the Pope supported same-sex unions.

On another note: In our next bulletin you will see a schedule of Advent and Christmas liturgies. We decided to keep the same schedule of holiday Masses as in previous years before COVID. Our hope is that people err on the side of great caution when it comes to attending Holiday services. **We simply can't have the normal Christmas crowds**; so please consider this as you plan your holiday. We are especially concerned about the 4 PM Christmas Eve Mass. That is usually the most crowded Mass. If you normally attend the 4pm Mass, could you attend a different Christmas Mass? We will be using the parish hall as overflow space, but that space also cannot be more than 50% capacity. It seems we are not at all out of the woods when it comes to the threat of the coronavirus, so please err on the side of caution. **Please do not attend, if there is any question of your being particularly vulnerable to the virus.** It seems

impossible to control the number of people who will attend. We are hoping that the holiday Mass turnout will be proportional to what our weekend turnout is now, so that social distancing can still happen. If it is obvious that there are too many arriving, we will have to turn people away. Of course, I thought of the possibility of adding more Masses, but we don't have the priest personnel to do this; and all priests on this holiday are plenty committed already, and the normal weekend Masses happen immediately after Christmas this year. Thanks for your understanding and your prudential judgement as you plan your family Christmas!

Have a blessed week!

*In cordibus Iesu et Mariae,*

Father Poggemeyer