



Second Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality - 2007

"If your dreams are in the clouds, do not worry, for they are in the right place; now, build the foundations". (Shakespeare)

"A sexual relationship does not exist in its full potential if it does not take into account love and justice towards the other person". (First Bishops' Pastoral Letter, 1997)

Ten years ago the Bishops of the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil released their First Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality. The Bishops' statement issued in that First Letter is still relevant for the Church today. However, because of developments that have occurred in the Church since the release of the First Pastoral Letter, including the desertion of a Bishop and many clergy in Northeastern Brazil and in other parts of the Worldwide Anglican Communion, we have decided to readdress this subject by releasing that letter again for careful reading and study.

The respect for differences of opinion related to questions that are not essential to the principle of Divine Revelation is embroidered into our Communion. This principle defines that "God was in Christ reconciling the world in Himself." Anything the Bible says that is not related to the essence of such Revelation is secondary, which means it is part of the culture and customs of those who were instruments of God for writing Scriptural texts. To us, the Bible is the Word of God in the sense of a message from God and not something dictated by God. And that is why, throughout the centuries, the Church discerns what is essential and what is secondary- what is Divine Revelation and what is human mediation, always connected to each time and culture. This discernment is not simply done through the opinions of individuals or groups. This discernment occurs as all the people of the Church are called to collaborate using its "sense of reality" and "good common sense" formed by faith and by life experience. This is Tradition: the Bible being read, throughout the centuries, according to the life of the People of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Reason's light is also very helpful. It is necessary to examine Scripture with the aid of theological and scientific reflection to discern, in each time, what God wants to tell us, so that we can experience in life the Divine work of reconciliation.

We see among us schismatic and disaggregating elements that cannot admit that there are in the Anglican Communion streams that diverge from their way of thinking. We understand that there are those who have authentic convictions; to those, we express our respect, and reaffirm that they are our brothers and sisters. There are those, however, who are dedicated to fomenting division for non-theological reasons, such as pride, power hunger, et cetera. This generates perverse distortions, related both to the nature of the Church and Communion (Ecclesiology), and to the nature of interpreting the Bible (Hermeneutics). We call both to union and common sense. Any kind of submission to a Curia or other authoritarian organism for doctrine or practice is alien to our Tradition. We believe in the freedom of thinking, because

"the truth will set us free". We believe in the virtue of tolerance, so characteristic of Anglicanism, which is capable of supporting communion around the Lord's Table and companionship in God's mission. This is a process that is developed and matured slowly, with dialogue and patient listening to others, with the result that the Church calls *sensus fidelium*, which is the common sense of the body of believers.

We reaffirm that we believe in inclusion. The creation of frontiers or divisions among people or groups and nations is the fruit of exclusion, which limits our vision, and fanatic dogmatism, which inhibits human freedom. Under the boundless love of God, we should build the foundations so that our dreams might come true. The Holy Spirit acts through these foundations and constructs a new humanity. This new humanity is based on the prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ that "all may be one".

Our First and Second Congresses on Human Sexuality had their conclusions following the guidelines of our First Pastoral Letter. We recognize that there are still many doubts concerning human sexuality among our people. Because of that, we recommend clergy to deepen their knowledge of this subject, so they will have pastoral instruments which will be adequate to attending to their congregations' needs.

PORTO ALEGRE, December, 2007

The Most Rev. Maurício José Araújo de Andrade, Primate
The Rt. Rev. Edmund Knox Sherril
The Rt. Rev. Clovis Erly Rodrigues
The Rt. Rev. Luiz Osório Prado
The Rt. Rev. Almir dos Santos
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