



First Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality - 1997

"Sexuality is a gift from God. Sexual relations which happen under a loving and mutual respect context are considered good things God created. As bishops, we recommend dialogue, common sense and pastoral concern towards the people who happen to have a homosexual orientation in faith communities."

1. We affirm that sexuality is a gift from God and that sexual relations, when under a context of love and mutual respect, not only should be accepted, but also considered as good things God created. On the other side, sexual promiscuity between people of the same, or opposite genders, must be fought, since it is contrary to the teachings of Scripture.

The Church must receive with love people of any race, culture, social upbringing or sexual orientation. After all, as Christians, we possess the promise of the Holy Spirit, who conducts us to the Word made flesh, who cares about the abandoned, the left behind, the marginalized, who shows love and compassion to the adulterous woman, who speaks to the Samaritan woman and who affirms the sanctity of men and women in Holy Matrimony.

2. Sexuality is an integral part of the human being. This blessed reality is expressed in conduct acts, which become affection acts, mutual relationships and knowledge between man and woman. This always happens within a community. That is why the biblical people established a determined pattern of conduct. Since sexual relations do not fulfill all their potential unless if they take into account love and justice towards the others, sexual violence acts are evil.

3. The 1988 Lambeth Conference, regarding family and matrimony, was not able to reduce the confusion regarding human sexuality. Some provinces affirm that homosexuality is sinful, while others adopt a contextual pastoral attitude. The sexual question, which encompasses all social and individual life aspects, is not at all clarified. Studies aimed at understanding how homosexuality developed continue; and, as bishops, we recommend dialogue, common sense and pastoral care with people who happen to have a homosexual orientation in faith communities. We cannot assume final positions on homosexual ordination or blessing of same-sex unions, because in the Anglican Communion, the subject is still being matured. The Bible, in some passages, explicitly condemns homosexual relationships, although, in most of them, what is really condemned is promiscuity, orgies or profanity. However, we must understand that the Bible was not dictated by God. It is God's Revelation, within its authors' interpretation, and subject to their culture and time influences (they lived in a sexist and patriarchal society).

4. It is necessary that the Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil includes in its educational programs and pastoral studies guidelines on human sexuality, taking into account the teaching of Scripture, the knowledge from human sciences, the Anglican

Tradition experience and a contextual comprehension of this controversial subject, so, the people of the Church will be able to assume the gift of sexuality, without pre-conceived ideas and within a healthy Christian sexuality, in the context of their faith communities and respecting the others.

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