

Why the Pope's Comments on Not Judging Homosexuals Aren't Biblical

Homosexual activists and gay religious groups are applauding the pope's willingness to "forgive and forget" the sins of gay priests. It seems the pope is the latest religious figure to try to placate the gay community. Sadly, his comments don't appear to be completely thought through, and they are definitely not biblical.

I do agree with the pope that any homosexual (or any other sinner for that matter) should be forgiven when he repents.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

And if God forgives them, so should we. But should they remain in the priesthood? That is another question entirely.

Here is a portion of the pope's comments:

"If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge them? They shouldn't be marginalized. The tendency [to homosexuality] is not the problem. ... They're our brothers."

Below are seven reasons I take issue with the pontiff.

1. Leaders Must Judge

It appears the pope is saying that while the act of homosexuality is a sin, it is okay to be a priest who has a same-sex attraction. As to his statement—"Who am I to judge?"—I would say, "You're the pope! And your job is to judge!"

There is a difference between judging rightly and hypocritical, looking-down-one's-nose judging, like in the case of the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee says, "I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner ... like that tax collector." (See Luke 18:9-14.)

However, in matters of congregational government, discerning right and wrong is the very essence of leadership. The congregation looks to leaders for protection, and that means sometimes we have to judge, discipline and even dis-fellowship the unrepentant. Many hearts bleed for the lawbreaker; a leader's heart bleeds for those who stray!

2. Do We Believe in "Gay"?

The pope believes it is OK to be a gay priest, as long as you don't act on those impulses. It seems we have forgotten there is no such thing as being gay, in the sense that you are born that way. The pope's very use of the word *gay* to describe a male with same-sex attraction is problematic and legitimizes the idea of being born gay.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan picked this up as well and stated, "My worry is that we're buying into the vocabulary that one's person is one's sexual identity, and I don't buy that and neither does the church."

Romans 1:26-27 teaches that attraction to people of the same sex is unnatural: "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error" (NIV).

The Catholic Church agrees with Scripture. John-Henry Westin notes, "The Catholic faith teaches that all homosexual acts are presented in Sacred Scriptures as 'acts of grave

depravity'; that they are 'intrinsically disordered' and that 'under no circumstances can they be approved.' (Catechism 2357)

"The Catechism [also] teaches that even the homosexual inclination is 'objectively disordered' and is a 'trial' for most who experience it. (Catechism 2358)"

I agree with the pope—the action is the sin, but the attraction reveals an unnatural tendency. We need to love that person, accept that person, encourage that person and help that person, but not put them in leadership.

3. Leadership Is Not a Right

The word *ministry* in Hebrew is the same word for *servant-shirut*. Being in leadership is not something owed to us. We are in ministry for the people and the Lord, not for ourselves. Hence, the pope's refusal to remove a priest who is attracted to men reveals the pope thinks the priest has a right to that position and cannot be disqualified for moral failure.

Furthermore, there are standards for new covenant leadership. If you don't meet those standards, you cannot and should not be a leader—no matter how gifted you are. A pastor attracted to men should not be a pastor. He can serve in many ways, but not in a primary leadership role.

Our compassion is misplaced when we care more for a leader than the people he leads.

4. "Don't Confuse Being Gay With Being a Pedophile!"

Italy's first openly gay governor, Nicki Vendola, who leads the southern Puglia region, praised the pope for drawing a clear line between homosexuality and pedophilia.

"In only one blow, he carried out a very brilliant operation, separating the theme of homosexuality from that of

pedophilia," the Associated Press reports.

No, no and no! The priest scandals were not about pedophilia primarily. It was (is) about priests who were sexually attracted to men, but given their chosen profession had no outlet. They were surrounded by men and often boys. For them, it was the only way to gratify themselves sexually—going to a gay bar was not an option.

I am sure there were some real dirtbags who targeted kids, but my guess (I am no expert, although I did consult with one on this and he agrees) is that they entered the priesthood because they didn't want to marry (they were not attracted to women) and felt this would be a respectable life. Of course, this is a horrible reason to enter ministry.

I am attracted to women. When I was 23, I got married, and to this day I enjoy a wonderful romantic life with my wife. Having a good marriage and a healthy life of intimacy may be the greatest defense to adultery. Being a single male in ministry, whereby one is in regular contact with women, where they see you as a leader, counselor and trusted friend, would provide temptations I am grateful I have not had to endure.

Now, imagine you are sexually attracted to men. You enter the priesthood. You think you are safe, but you find yourself surrounded by men and often boys and teens. And let's face it, in terms of physical attraction, an older teen may as well be an adult. Being sexually attracted to a 16-year-old is very different than being drawn to a 5-year-old.

The last place someone with unnatural sexual desires needs to be is around the most vulnerable, who are looking to them for counsel.

Dr. Michael Brown states the obvious: "Do we really think that a bunch of young gay men living together in a seminary setting will all be saintly enough to keep themselves pure? And is it realistic to think that, later in their ministries, they will

not struggle as they work alone with their teenage altar boys?"

Bill Muehlenberg states (though it is unclear who he is quoting), "In 2005 Pope Francis' predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, formally barred men deemed to have 'deep-seated homosexual tendencies' from entering the priesthood."

This is why there are far less occurrences of priests fornicating with women or teenaged girls. A heterosexual priest who cannot control his desires will typically leave the priesthood and get married—not molest. However, it is a different story for a priest with homosexual tendencies. He feels that he has no other option and has chosen the priesthood in large part because of his same-sex tendencies.

5. Ephesians 4:11 or Religious Dudes?

According to the Bible, leaders of congregations are called to equip the saints for works of ministry (Eph. 4:12). They preach, empower, heal the sick, counsel and raise up leaders.

However, a typical Catholic priest looks nothing like this. His main concern is doing preordained "religious stuff," like serving the Eucharist and hearing confession, not preaching the gospel or shaking a city. The pope must rationalize that there is no reason a gay priest can't do that stuff.

6. It's the Action, Not the Thought?

We have to be very careful with this line of thinking. As a heterosexual man, I cannot let my mind run wild, meditating on fantasies with other women. I can't look at pornography. I can't think of other women when I am being intimate with my wife. These are sins.

So we must be careful when we say we have no problem with "thoughts" of homosexuality, as long as one doesn't act on them. We must be clear that a priest who thinks constantly of

homosexual activity but doesn't act on it is guilty of the sin, just as Yeshua said that one who meditates on adultery is guilty.

Furthermore, how long does a person meditate on it before he acts on it? And where will he look for a partner? Not at a gay bar, as stated before, but within his own parish. And in many cases, the person is under the age of consent.

The idea that thoughts are fine but action is sin should be changed to "tendency is tolerable, but thoughts and actions are sin."

7. Priesthood: A Safe Place for Gays?

Lastly, the priesthood has become a safe haven for not only pedophiles, but also men with homosexual tendencies. The pope's comments basically say, "Yeah, if you are attracted to men, we want you to be a priest. If you messed up in the past, we will forgive you and keep you in ministry."

For political correctness, the pope gets an A. For protecting young boys and teens from "gay priests" who know they can use their position of power to manipulate and intimidate these young men, he gets a big fat F!

I get what the new pope is trying to do. His "I ain't your daddy's pope" presentation is fresh and attractive. We should always be willing to relate to the world by embracing cultural trends. But never should we sacrifice truth or doctrine to win over our detractors, and that is exactly what the pope has done!

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