



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE STATE OF HAWAII
DIOCESE OF HONOLULU
WITNESS TO JESUS

October 21, 2020

**REFLECTIONS OF BISHOP LARRY SILVA, CATHOLIC BISHOP OF HONOLULU,
REGARDING THE STATEMENT OF POPE FRANCIS ENDORSING CIVIL UNIONS FOR
PERSONS WITH SAME-SEX ATTRACTIONS**

Many people were quite surprised today to hear that Pope Francis, in an interview, said the following regarding people with a homosexual inclination:

"They're children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable because of it."

"What we have to create is a civil union law," he added. "That way, they are legally covered."

First of all, I was as surprised as anyone to hear this news; and, I have learned over the years, that often quotes are taken out of context and can take on a different meaning than the intended meaning of the speaker.

Pope Francis is correct in saying that "They're children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable because of it." We all need family support, and a person who has homosexual inclinations should not be ostracized from a family simply for that inclination, nor should their human dignity be diminished because of it.

It is the second part of the statement about a civil union law that is problematic.

Based on the Word of God and its centuries-long reflection on human nature, the Catholic Church has always taught that any genital expression outside of the legitimate marriage between one man and one woman is wrong. This applies to heterosexual as well as homosexual relations. The Church teaches that same-sex marriage is unacceptable, because marriage always implies a sexual union. Pope Francis has continually voiced his opposition to same-sex marriage, so nothing has changed there.

Although I do not agree fully with Pope Francis on what he has supposedly stated about civil unions (and I am free to disagree, since this remark was by no means an infallible teaching), I do admit civil unions could be a different category than marriage. If two homosexually inclined people are living chastely but want to share a household for mutual emotional, spiritual, and economic support, there is nothing wrong with that. Perhaps they may even benefit from a legal union that allows one to be the beneficiary of employment benefits, or to have the ability to freely visit the other when hospitalized; then perhaps such a civil union might be understandable. I am presuming that Pope Francis's statement would endorse such an arrangement. I do not personally endorse this viewpoint since it can often be confused with marriage. I do agree with Pope Francis that we must always treat everyone with the dignity he or she deserves as a human being and a child of God.