

Defining Homosexuality

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Q: Why is homosexuality a sin?

A: First, homosexuality is not a sin. The term “homosexuality” refers to the condition of being sexually attracted to members of one’s own gender. An attraction, even a same-sex attraction, is not sinful; it is simply a description of what is. Every one of us struggles daily with our attractions and desires. This is the human condition: we are made good, but are sometimes attracted to things that aren’t good for us.

Of course, not all desires are bad. In fact, every human person innately desires the good. We all long for love. We all long for friendship. We all long for the truth. But we are also often tempted toward things that aren’t good. We long for love, but we are sometimes tempted to use other people. We long for friendship, but we may be tempted to manipulate friends. We long for the truth, but we can be tempted to lie. All of these temptations are simply that: temptations. They are our desires out-of-order.

The Catholic Church sometimes uses the word “disorder” when referring to these attractions. This ought to make sense to all of us: we are made for good and any attraction to something which is not good is a disordered desire.

The same is true when it comes to sexuality. All humans are ordered towards loving and being loved. Every one of us is made for love. No one is excluded from this. But we also recognize something within us that is attracted towards using another person for our own purpose. A man is tempted to fantasize about a woman who is not his wife. A girl is tempted to act out sexually with her boyfriend. A woman is tempted to read romance novels and insert herself in the story. A priest is sexually attracted to a woman in his parish. A man is attracted sexually to another man.

All of these are “simply” disordered attractions. We can wag our finger and say, “Don’t think like that!”, but what would that do? Wouldn’t it be better to point out what these people are actually longing for? They (and all of us) are longing to know and be known...to love and be loved.

A person who is attracted to a member of the same gender is desiring something that is good; they are desiring love. The problem is the fact that this good desire has become sexualized. This is huge. In our culture, we have reduced love to “romantic love”. We have further reduced romantic love to “sex”. Therefore, if I deny someone sex, I am saying that they may not know love. But that is ridiculous. All of us know that love is more than sex and we know that love is more than romance. In fact, wiser, more ancient cultures believed that friendship was a greater form of love than erotic love.

This is what every person is longing for: true friendship. Why else do couples continually say things like, “I married my best friend”? They realize that friendship is higher and more precious than “in-loveness”. I can fall in love with virtually any cute person...to find a true friend is another thing entirely. Every person is called to love. It is very possible that not every person is called to act that love out in a sexual way. If two men or two women love each other in a real way, is the addition of sexual acts going to deepen that love? Do we assume that “adding sex” necessarily “adds love”? Would the introduction of sex into a parent-adult child relationship add to the relationship or destroy it? I only use that example to demonstrate the faulty reasoning that the sexual expression of love is always a good.

Sex is ordered towards two things: bonding the couple and bringing forth life. There is only one context in which this is possible: in the marriage of one man and one woman. If there is no marriage, there is often no sense of true commitment and the bonding of the couple is weak. If both genders are not represented, the possibility of life is thwarted. Anything that directly violates either the bonding or the possibility of life is a disordered use of the sexual act (as well as use of the other person).

We are all called to this. Do we realize that? This is for everyone. Men and women with same-sex attraction are not singled out in this. Every disciple of Jesus Christ is called to live differently. We are all called to enter into the struggle for holiness and purity of life. A man or woman with same-sex attraction does not need to feel ashamed.

If you have homosexual feelings, do not panic. Don't be discouraged. And please, do not hate yourself. But I also invite you not to forget this fact: you are called to be holy. A large part of that is simply letting yourself be loved by God(even when we fall) and walking in hope. I have no doubt that there are a number of canonized saints who had to walk the same path you may find yourself on.

You have a place in the Catholic Church. She will call you to being a true disciple of Jesus Christ (which includes chastity), but She will also call you to the love and the glory for which God has destined you.

For more information, please check out:

This will be the first post of a four-part column series! Keep reading the next few weeks to dive into Father Mike's responses to the following topics offered by fellow readers:

Week 2: "God Made Me This Way"

Week 3: Is Same-Sex Marriage A Civil Right?

Week 4: What Does My Same-Sex Marriage Have to Do With Anyone Else?