

MAGISTERIUM

Scandinavian bishops on gender are right, but only in part

ECCLESIA

30_03_2023



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"The normative anthropology of gender, based on the positive law of nature, and its legitimisation through recourse to the biblical texts on Creation must be revised in the light of the knowledge acquired by modern biblical science and theology". In the face of

this 'pearl' from the document of the Fourth Forum of the German Synod (downloadable [here](#)), which defends the existence of the transsexual and intersexual variant, and, within them, a “great variety of individual articulations”, the *Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality* of the Scandinavian bishops, among whom we also find Cardinal Anders Arborelius, appears like the *Dictatus Papae* of Gregory VII.

Therefore, the enthusiastic reception of the document by some Catholic websites is partly understandable. In fact, the fundamental biblical truth that “the image of God in human nature is manifested in the complementarity of male and female” is affirmed; the sexual identity, male or female, which is given to us, is not a frill, but a characterisation of the person, because of his or her 'embodied integrity'. Any dystonia in self-perception cannot therefore lead to the choice of a 'gender', but must be oriented towards the “search for a sexual integration” that is harmonious with the datum imprinted in our flesh.

Undoubtedly, this path of integration requires a gradualness commensurate with the steps the person can take from time to time; however, the statement that assesses as "an enormous leap forward" the transition from promiscuous relationships to "fidelity, whether or not the stable relationship fully corresponds to the objective order of a sacramentally blessed nuptial union" seems rather problematic.

The phrase is highly equivocal. First of all, because a relationship that includes acts of a homosexual nature, however 'faithful' it may be, does not simply correspond 'less' to the objective order of the marriage union, but does not correspond to it at all, because it remains a grave disorder; nor can it in any way be directed to a good.

It is also hard to accept the principle that 'fidelity' in disordered sexual relations can be hailed as an 'enormous leap in quality'. What quality are we talking about? It is not clearly understandable. From the point of view of the moral species defining the homosexual act, in fact, the quality remains the same. We seem to hear the theoretical undertone of *Amoris Laetitia*, which in § 298 called for a special discernment of situations of “second union consolidated over time, with new children, with proven fidelity, generous dedication, Christian commitment, awareness of the irregularity of one's situation and great difficulty in going back without feeling in conscience that one would fall into new faults”.

Faced with these situations, the Exhortation referred back to *Familiaris Consortio*, 84 - which indicated absolute continence when separation was impossible - commenting, however, in the footnote that "many, knowing and accepting the possibility

of living together 'as brother and sister' that the Church offers them, note that if certain expressions of intimacy are lacking, 'it is not rare that fidelity is jeopardised and the good of the children may be compromised'. In essence, the path of fidelity to Christ - i.e. abstaining from non-marital relationships - would undermine the supposed good of fidelity. It is understood that this short-circuiting was possible by misunderstanding the term "fidelity".

AL decisively and problematically went further than the pastoral letter of the Scandinavian bishops; however, what they have in common is precisely the distorted idea of fidelity, and thus the misuse of this word. Herod was faithful to his promise to give anything to Herodias' daughter when the girl, instigated by her mother, demanded the head of John the Baptist. How are we to evaluate this act of 'faithfulness'? There is no doubt that it aggravated the king's reckless oath and lust, inducing him to homicide. How should we evaluate the mutual 'loyalty' of two thugs, Bonnie and Clyde style, in supporting and helping each other commit crimes? Similarly, the 'fidelity' of two people in committing homosexual acts, rather than adultery, cannot constitute an 'enormous leap forward' from a moral point of view.

On closer inspection, it is rather the opposite of that specific fidelity which is conjugal fidelity, which entails the rejection of extramarital relations; and it is the negation of that fidelity to God, which consists in living in accordance with His will. Finally, 'fidelity' in evil constitutes the *de profundis* of that fidelity to the person of the other, which requires instead the witness of truth and goodness, and not complicity in evil.

Another point. The Scandinavian bishops rightly recall that their mission "is to point out the pacifying and life-giving path of Christ's commandments, narrow at first, but expanding as we advance". And they just as correctly teach that "sacramental communion presupposes a consistently lived consent to the conditions of the covenant sealed in the blood of Christ", whereby "it may happen that circumstances make it impossible for a Catholic to receive the sacraments for a time".

However, never in the letter is it clearly expressed that God's commandments condemn homosexuality, nor that exclusion from Communion and the impossibility of receiving absolution in the sacrament of Penance lasts until there is true repentance for the sin in the person, and a genuine and sincere intention not to commit it again. It is necessary but not sufficient for a document of bishops to distance themselves from that pernicious ideology that considers man as disembodied, and therefore indifferent to his sexual characterisation. This is in fact the theoretical substratum that claims the moral

freedom to perform certain acts and live in more or less stable relationships against nature. The Church must watch over both aspects and point them out with great clarity for what they are: not a simple error, but a real sin, which prevents souls from achieving their good in this life and the next.