

SHOCKING STATEMENTS

"We Belgian bishops bless gay couples, with the Pope's approval"

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In Belgium, the bishops are all united in approving the blessing of same-sex couples and of other irregular couples; there is even a ritual, and the Pope reportedly gave his approval last November during his *ad limina* visit. These are the explosive statements of

the Archbishop of Antwerp, Monsignor Johan Bonny at the assembly of the German Synod which can be heard [here](#) (from minute 06:08:46) within the full video of the 5th Synodal Assembly of the German Synod.

In a day packed with speeches, each lasting a minute and a half, Bonny had the benefit of a good eight minutes to recount how the Belgian bishops officially introduced blessings for irregular couples in their dioceses (we had spoken about it [here](#) and [here](#)), in defiance of the **Responsum** that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith had issued the year before, with the Pope's approval.

A truly surreal atmosphere, that of the Assembly, with speeches of all kinds: from the most theological reflections, to requests from psychologists to approve the blessing of homosexual couples, so as not to have future suicides on their consciences of people disappointed by the rejection of the Church; to a young woman who starts reading the messages received from no one knows who, asking the Assembly to change the Church. A theatre of the absurd, culminating in the incredible 'Eucharistic celebration' (from minute 2: 58:27): soft lights, blues music, piano bar style, singer "wiggling his hips", and instead of the Responsorial Psalm or Gospel Hymn (difficult to interpret this liturgical creativity) ventures into vocals of "ah, eh, ooh"; priest with surplice and stole, rigorously without Missal, who at times peeks at a leaflet, at others relies on his memory, adding and removing here and there "*ad libitum*", inventing the "Eucharistic Prayer" from scratch; the assembly sprawling on chairs, with their synod notes, laptops, and bottles of water in front of them. Seeing is believing.

Msgr Bonny explained that the Belgian prelates, after reading and meditating for two days on the post-synodal Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, had produced a short text of two and a half pages, with only four paragraphs, which laid down two fundamental points: a stable pastoral care of queer people (this is the term used by Bonny, but from the context it is clear that he means all LGBTQ orientations), with the designation of a person responsible for each diocese, and a stable inter-diocesan group; the blessing of all irregular couples.

The first paragraph, the archbishop explained, points to the two texts that form the basis for these two decisions, namely paragraphs 297 and 303 of *Amoris Laetitia*. Both belong to chapter eight, the decidedly most problematic and most discussed chapter of the Exhortation. The first one, No. 297, is the Pope's exhortation to "integrate everyone", to "help each person to find their own way of participating in the ecclesial community, so that they may feel themselves to be the object of an 'undeserved, unconditional, and gratuitous' mercy".

The paragraph does not refer "only to divorced people in a new union, but to everyone, in whatever situation they find themselves". This text, "regarding the way to deal with the various so-called 'irregular' situations", concludes, in a very vague way, the need to "reveal to them the divine pedagogy of grace in their lives and help them reach the fullness of God's plan in them".

The second paragraph, no. 303, is the famous passage on the involvement of conscience in the pastoral care of the Church; conscience can in fact "recognise with sincerity and honesty what for the moment is the generous response that can be offered to God, and discover with a certain moral certainty that that is the donation that God himself is asking for in the midst of the concrete complexity of limitations, even though it is not yet fully the objective ideal".

In the application made by the Belgian bishops, a disordered and objectively sinful sexual relationship can thus become the maximum that can be offered to God at a given moment, and the Church, for its part, must not only respect this erroneous discernment of conscience, it must unconditionally integrate all. In this logic, the blessing of irregular couples is magically transformed from a blessing of a disordered relationship to a blessing of that imperfect 'good' that at that moment constitutes the concrete 'generous response that can be offered to God'.

These two points of *Amoris Laetitia* - let us bear this in mind - served as support for the openness to blessings of homosexual couples, affirmed in the fourth paragraph of the Belgian bishops' document. The text was approved by all the Belgian bishops, even though the French-speaking bishops each wanted to present their own document, but with the same contents. According to Bonny's account, the text was produced in discussion with the Holy See; in the end, "we published the text and then there was silence". A round of applause from those present accompanied the words of the Archbishop of Antwerp.

The text, unanimously accepted, was then taken to Rome, during the *ad limina* visit last November, a week after that of the German bishops. This is how Bonny reported on that meeting with the Roman authorities: "They all said - and this is the important thing - 'it is your Bishops' Conference, it is your decision'. The Pope said neither yes nor no. 'It is up to you'".

The bishops had also decided to present an outline for carrying out these blessings; not an actual ritual, but a draft, which could then be customised in each diocese; after a couple of years of liturgical experiments, the bishops agreed that the best texts would be chosen, so that they could then have a common ritual. The bishop of Antwerp adds: "We spoke with the Pope about this, too. And he said: 'it's your decision, I can understand that'. The important thing for him was to continue with wisdom and to remain united. Twice he asked: 'Do you all agree? Do you walk together?' Then we said: yes".

Archbishop Bonny's statements do not refer to an alleged private conversation with the Pope, like the ones Italian journalist Eugenio Scalfari had accustomed us to. They are statements given in the presence of all the bishops of Belgium, during an important and official *ad limina* visit. And they are statements of enormous gravity, revealing the Pope's support for a real heresy. Msgr Bonny then refers them not to his housekeeper, but to the entire Synodal Assembly of the Church in Germany, words that are not journalists' reconstructions, but those he actually uttered, and which everyone can hear. Words that, moreover, indicate a clearly heterodox interpretation of an Apostolic Exhortation that is more than ambiguous and on which Pope Francis has never wanted to give a clear answer.

It is therefore evident that we are faced with an explosive and tragic situation that requires immediate and prompt clarification by the Holy See. Because one cannot turn a blind eye to a Pope who takes away the authority of bishops to decide whether a Mass in the Ancient Rite can be celebrated in a parish, but who grants the same bishops the authority to perform heretical and blasphemous acts. As long as they do it wisely and are all united.