Common Misconceptions: Catholic Teaching and LGBTQ Persons

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Misconception: The Church teaches that being LGBTQ is a sin

What the Church Says: The Church distinguishes between the dignity of the human person, a person's attractions, and freely chosen actions. Having a homosexual orientation is not sinful, while the Church teaches that sexual activity belongs within a marriage between a man and a woman.

Sources: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican Library, 1997), nos. 2357–2361; National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers* (United States Catholic Conference, 1997); United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care* (USCCB, 2006).

Misconception: The Church rejects LGBTQ persons

What the Church Says: The Church teaches that every human person has an inviolable dignity that must be acknowledged and respected. Speaking specifically about persons with a homosexual orientation, the Church says they "must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity" and that "every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided."

Sources: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican Library, 1997), no. 2358; Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas Infinita: Declaration on Human Dignity* (The Holy See, 2024), nos. 1–2; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care* (USCCB, 2006).

Misconception: The Church teaches that LGBTQ persons are "disordered"

What the Church Says: The Church does not teach that any person is disordered. The term is philosophical, not medical or psychological. In Catholic moral theology, "objectively disordered" refers to attractions or actions understood as out of alignment with their purpose. The Catechism uses this language based on the Church's understanding of sexuality and marriage.

Sources: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican Library, 1997), nos. 2357–2358; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (1986), no. 3; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care* (2006).

Misconception: The Church teaches that there is no such thing as a transgender person

What the Church Says: The Church acknowledges transgender persons as persons whose experiences require pastoral attention. In 2023, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith wrote that "a transgender person" can receive Baptism, serve as a godparent, and be a witness to marriage under the same basic conditions as other believers.

Sources: Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Answers to Several Questions from His Excellency, the Most Reverend José Negri, Bishop of Santo Amaro, Brazil, Regarding Participation in the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony by Transgender Persons and Homosexual Persons* (The Holy See, 2023).

Misconception: The Church teaches that being LGBTQ is a choice

What the Church Says: The Church does not teach that people choose their sexual orientation. The Catechism states that the psychological origins of homosexuality "remain largely unexplained," and the US bishops have acknowledged that a homosexual orientation is "not freely chosen." Church teaching also does not provide an account of how gender identity develops, while affirming that biological sex and the sociocultural dimensions of gender "can be distinguished but not separated."

Sources: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican Library, 1997), no. 2357; United States Catholic Conference, *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning* (USCCB Publishing, 1990); National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers* (Committee on Marriage and Family, 1997); Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Holy See, 2016), no. 56.

Misconception: The Church teaches that Catholics cannot use the term LGBTQ

What the Church Says: The Church cautions against reducing a person's identity to sexual orientation or gender identity. The Vatican has said it refuses to consider a person solely by their sexual orientation because every person is first a child of God. However, there is no Church prohibition against using terms such as LGBTQ or LGBTQ+, which have both been used in Vatican-published synodal documents.

Sources: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (The Holy See, 1986), no. 16; National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers* (Committee on Marriage and Family, 1997); Synod of Bishops, *Enlarge the Space of Your Tent: Working Document for the Continental Stage* (The Holy See, 2022), no. 39; Synod of Bishops, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission. Instrumentum Laboris* (The Holy See, 2023), sec. B 1.2.

Misconception: The Church teaches that using a person's chosen name or pronouns is a lie

What the Church Says: The Church has not determined that using a person's chosen name or pronouns is dishonest or sinful. Instead, the Church maintains that pastoral decisions should cultivate a "flexibility of spirit" that enables caregivers to respond in ways that promote a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Sources: *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican Library, 1997), nos. 2482–2485; Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Holy See, 2013), nos. 169–173; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation in the United States of America*, 6th ed. (USCCB, 2022), no. 370.

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