

Fr. Perozich comments —

If a bishop does not teach from scripture and tradition the truth of the faith, the clergy and lay faithful are misled. I could not follow this type of teaching from a bishop.

It is a classic example of Vital Immanence from Pius X document Pascendi, where a person, in this case the bishop, is the subject and source of reference for himself rather than is God.

A Bishop Who Must Decide

By Fr. Gerald E. Murray WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24, 2021

The recent *Responsum* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, restating the Church's teaching on the sinful nature of homosexual acts, and thus the impossibility of an ordained minister of the Church legitimately conferring a blessing upon the union of two homosexuals, should have evoked expressions of gratitude from all the bishops of the Church. Many face continuous pressure from various quarters to abandon the Church's doctrine and practice concerning homosexuality. Instead, a number of bishops, primarily in Western Europe but also in America, have strongly criticized and indicated their disagreement, and even disgust, with the *Responsum*.

Perhaps the most vehement public rejection was issued by the Bishop of Antwerp, Johan Bonny. In the Flemish-language *De Standaard* (cited in English here and here) he wrote:

- “I feel ashamed for my Church. I mainly feel intellectual and moral incomprehension.”
- “I want to apologize to all for whom this is painful and incomprehensible.”

- “Intellectually, this does not even reach the level of high school. These kind[s] of arguments, the logic, you see right through it. These days, you don’t convince anyone that way.”
- “Sin is one of the most difficult theological and moral categories to define, and one of the last to pin on people and their way of living together.”
- “I myself know gay couples, in civil marriages with children, who form a warm and stable family, and who also actively participate in parish life. Some of them are active full-time as pastoral or church employees. I am very grateful to them. Who has an interest in denying that no resemblance or analogy to heterosexual marriage is possible here?”
- “A respectful approach to same-sex marriage can only take place in the broader context of the Order of Service for Marriage, as an eventual variation on the theme of marriage and family life, with an honest acknowledgement of actual similarities and differences.”



Bishop Bonny

Bishop Bonny's plain rejection of the Church's teaching on the gravely sinful nature of homosexual acts and the impossibility of so-called same-sex marriage is stunning. He is *ashamed* of and apologizes for the Church's teaching and practice, which he finds to be disrespectful and incomprehensible.

The *Responsum* is mocked as illogical and intellectually juvenile, particularly since, as he remarkably claims, the definition of what counts as sin is extremely difficult to arrive at, as is any attribution of sinfulness to the behavior of people who engage in homosexual acts. He is grateful to the homosexual couples he knows who, while scandalizing the faithful by their public proclamation of their sinful lifestyle, are active in their parishes or are even full-time Church employees. As he sees it, their relationship, which is based on a mutual promise to engage in acts of sodomy, is in fact a "variation" that possesses a "resemblance" and "actual similarities" to marriage.

Is this how a Catholic bishop is supposed to teach, govern and sanctify the faithful? The 2004 *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* states: "Conforming himself to Christ, the Bishop offers an outstanding service to unity and to ecclesial communion: his conduct demonstrates that no one in the Church may legitimately command others if he does not first offer himself as an example of obedience to the Word of God and to the authority of the Church." (#43)

"In the light of the Word of God, the Bishop should be able to discern and evaluate currents of thought, as well as anthropological and scientific trends, so as to respond, with fidelity to the doctrine and discipline of the Church, to the new questions arising in society." (#52)
"In exercising his pastoral ministry, the Bishop should act in the knowledge that he is the "visible principle and foundation" of unity in his diocese, but always with a view also to the unity of the whole Catholic Church. He should promote unity in faith, in love and in discipline, so that the diocese is aware that it forms a vital part of the whole People of God." (#58)



“It is also the Bishop’s task to proclaim always and everywhere the *moral principles of the social order*, in this way announcing man’s authentic liberation, brought about through the Incarnation of the Word. When the rights of the human person or the salvation of souls so demand, it is his duty to express a judgment based on revelation about the concrete realities of human life: in particular, on matters concerning the value of life, the meaning of freedom, the unity and stability of the family, the procreation and education of children. . . .The Bishop should not fail to make known to his people the teachings and guidelines that he receives from the Holy See.” (#120)

Bishop Bonny did not decide to reject Church teaching on the day that the Holy See issued the Responsum. His comments reveal a longtime practical acceptance of homosexual activity as a moral good that should be respected and approved of by the faithful.

At the time of his installation as the Bishop of Antwerp he publicly swore the required *Oath of Fidelity* that includes the following: “I promise that in my words and actions I shall always preserve communion with the Catholic Church. . . .I shall hold fast to the deposit of faith in its entirety; I shall faithfully hand it on and

explain it, and I shall avoid any teachings contrary to it. . . .So help me God.”

Bishop Bonny faces a decision if he is to remain true to God and the words he solemnly swore on the Bible: recant his rejection of the Church’s teaching and faithfully proclaim that teaching within his diocese. If he cannot do that, he should immediately resign.

For the good of his soul and of the souls of his flock, I pray he recants. If he refuses and also refuses to resign, he should be removed by Pope Francis as a stumbling block, a true scandal to the faithful.

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