

Statement of Bishop Burbidge on Pope Francis's Words Regarding “civil unions”

Parishioners of the Diocese of Arlington have shared their concerns and questions regarding reports of the Holy Father's comments in a recent documentary.

Contrary to some reports, Pope Francis did not endorse “gay marriage” or in any way change the Church's constant teaching on human sexuality. Marriage is the permanent, exclusive, and fruitful union between one man and one woman. Human sexuality is designed only for the chaste union of man and woman in marriage. These are unchanging and unchangeable truths of the human person known to us by both natural law and divine revelation. The Pope did not and would not teach otherwise. Indeed, he has repeatedly affirmed these truths throughout his pontificate.

Again, contrary to how they have been depicted, the Holy Father's comments in a documentary do not constitute a change in the Church's teaching. Nor should any reference to civil unions be understood as the Church accepting homosexual behavior as morally licit. Pope Francis' clear concern is that those with same-sex attractions be treated with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.

May we be renewed in our commitment to pray daily for the Holy Father, who bears the extraordinary burden of caring for the universal Church during these difficult times.