

POLICY OF THE PROVINCE OF MIAMI DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Approved by the Bishops, September 29, 2001

Controversies have arisen regarding discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in housing, employment and public accommodations and regarding laws to prohibit or regulate such discrimination. There are also proposals to recognize "domestic partners" as a legal relationship equivalent to that of husband and wife, and to provide school curriculum guides concerning these matters. With respect to these areas of concern, the following principles apply:

. . . with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (n.29), Vatican Council II.

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. Catechism of the Catholic Church (n.2358).

Human dignity and human rights are God-given; they are not earned nor are they legislated. Our tradition affirms these rights, seeking human respect, economic and personal security, and social equality for all people.

Legislation, however, often brings with it unknown or unintended effects. The Right of Privacy provision in the Florida Constitution is a good example. Originally promoted as protection against excessive governmental intrusion in the lives of its citizens, it was later construed to guarantee a right of abortion.

The traditional values of chastity, the sanctity of marriage and family, as well as the development of sound parent-child relationships, and the freedom of parents to rear their children in a healthy and moral climate are critical to a well ordered society. All of these are under assault today and can be further threatened by poorly conceived legislation. Attempts to protect people from discrimination should not exacerbate these problems. People should not be forced by law to accept into their homes, personal lives, or schools, behavior or a lifestyle which they find morally objectionable, even in the cause of non-discrimination. Homosexual activity and certain lifestyles are deemed immoral and objectionable by many, including the Church. Legislation must not make homosexual behavior or lifestyle a protected or approved activity, but rather prohibit discrimination against persons. It should not seek to equate legal marriage and homosexual relationships.

BASED ON THESE PRINCIPLES, the Florida Catholic Conference will continue: 1) to affirm and defend the human and civil rights of homosexual persons, as well as all others; 2) to oppose discrimination against such persons; 3) to affirm and defend the church's teaching on marriage and the family; 4) to maintain the distinction between sexual orientation and sexual activity; and, 5) to make sure that society's concern for the family, for parental rights and for the personal freedom of all citizens are protected in any proposed legislation.