December 20, 2023

A Pastor's Response

Bishop William D. Byrne

In light of this past week's declaration "Fiducia supplicans" issued by the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, as well as my recently co-signed OpEd with Catholics for Inclusion, a local group in western Massachusetts, I offer these brief reflections.

As part of the synodal process, I met with members of Catholics for Inclusion and others who had family members that are gay or lesbians. Time after time I heard that these members of my Catholic family felt unloved and unwanted by the Church. As a spiritual father I am heartbroken by this thought. I signed the OpEd to build a bridge to them and their families.

Jesus teaches us through our Church that we are precious, beloved and we are literally worth dying for. His resurrection is our healing and that we are desired by God for all eternity. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We are God's adopted children. This above all else is what defines us. In this reality we are one Body of Christ. This is the good news that I want every person to know. Jesus is the one I want every person to know.

Jesus invites us to the fullness of life which includes every aspect of our lives, including human sexuality. Chastity is an important part of living as disciples. For those who are unmarried, including those who live with same-sex attraction, chastity can be challenging but Jesus walks with us at every moment and gives us the strength to follow him in holiness and joy.

In the Holy Mass before the reception of Jesus in the Eucharist, the priest elevates the Host and the congregation, clerics and laity alike say, "Lord I am not worthy to receive you…" This is true for every person at every Mass. But then we finish with these words, "but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." We recognize that we are all called to an on-going conversion which is brought about only through God's grace.

Most Reverend William D. Byrne
Bishop of Springfield