

“What Do We Tell Our Kids about Gay and Lesbian People?”

The United States Catholic Conference [HS, p.88] says: “*Families take many forms and configurations today . . . It is important for diocesan leaders to address various family models in services rendered.*” They offer these guidelines for areas to include when educating children about human sexuality:

... *Childhood [6 to 11]: sexual orientation*, p.103

... *Early Adolescence: simple explanation of church teaching regarding heterosexuality and homosexuality*, p.107

... *Adolescence: teaching . . . about heterosexuality and homosexuality from a Catholic perspective*, p.112

Here are some ways to apply these guidelines when asked about families with two moms or two dads.

Early Childhood (before age 6)

You might say not all families have a mom and a dad. Give examples of families with a single mom or a single dad, or where a grandmother or grandfather lives with the family. Similarly, some families have two moms or two dads. “*It is important for diocesan leaders to address various family models in services rendered.*” [HS, p.88].

Childhood (age 6 to 11)

You might say that most men fall in love with a woman, and most women fall in love with a man. However, some men fall in love with another man. Some women fall in love with another woman. That’s just the way we are. Some of us have a tendency to fall in love with someone of the same sex. Some of us have a tendency to fall in love with someone of the opposite sex. “*A homosexual orientation produces a stronger emotional and sexual attraction toward individuals of the same sex, rather than toward those of the opposite sex.*” [AOC, p.6]

Early Adolescence and Adolescence (age 12 to 16)

You might use some of these quotes from various documents.

- *[M]any scientists share the view that sexual orientation is shaped for most people at an early age through complex interactions of biological, psychological and social factors. . . . and scientific evidence does not show that conversion therapy works and that it can do more harm than good.* [APA, p.1]
- *God loves every person as a unique individual. Sexual identity helps to define the unique persons we are. One component of our sexual identity is sexual orientation.* [AOC, p.7]
- *God does not love someone any less simply because he or she is homosexual.* [AOC, p.7]
- *[I]t seems appropriate to understand sexual orientation (heterosexual or homosexual) as a deep-seated dimension of one’s personality and to recognize its relative stability in a person.* [AOC, p.6]
- *Generally, homosexual orientation is experienced as a given, not as something freely chosen. By itself, therefore, a homosexual orientation cannot be considered sinful, for morality presumes the freedom to choose.* [AOC, p.6]
- *Parents and other educators must remain open to the possibility that a particular person, whether adolescent or adult, may be struggling to accept his or her own orientation.* [HS, p.56]
- *The Church teaches that homogenital behavior is objectively immoral, while making the important distinction between this behavior and a homosexual orientation, which is not immoral in itself.* [AOC, p.8-9]
- *It is only in the marital relationship that the use of the sexual faculty can be morally good.* [PCHP, #7]
- *{W}e recognize . . . that the practice of many individuals, homosexual and heterosexual, falls short of this norm [sexual genital activity only in marriage], that circumstances strongly alter the nature of cases and that we are wise to leave the judgment of hearts to God who knows all about us, our sin included, and yet continually calls us to deeper life.* [MHC]
- *Humankind looks at appearances; God looks at the heart.* [1 Sam 16:7] in [QCSE, #10]
- *The God who is at once truth and love calls the Church to minister to every man, woman and child with the pastoral solicitude of our compassionate Lord.* [PCHP, #18]
- *Nothing in the Bible or in Catholic teaching can be used to justify prejudicial or discriminatory attitudes and behaviors.* [AOC, p.10]
- *Homosexual [persons], like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. They have a right to respect, friendship, and justice. They should have an active role in the Christian community.* [ICJ, #52]

AOC = Committee on Marriage and Family Life, National Council of Catholic Bishops, *Always Our Children*, 1998, 3rd printing

APA = American Psychological Association, *Answers to Your Questions About Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality*, 1993

HS = United States Catholic Conference, Human Sexuality (Washington, DC: USCC, 1991)

ICJ = National Council of Catholic Bishops, *In Christ Jesus*, 1976

MHC = Bishop Matthew H. Clark, “We should listen, leave judgment to God” (Rochester Catholic Courier, April 24, 1997)

PCHP = Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 1986

QCSE = Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, 1975