



Why is being "gay" a sin? Philip T.

There is a difference between a homosexual *orientation* (that is, finding members of the same gender sexually attractive) and homosexual *acts* (sexual activity between members of the same sex). The Church teaches that homosexual *orientation* is not sinful—though it is an inclination or a tendency toward sinful behavior that must be resisted. Homosexual *acts*, however, are always sinful, because sexual acts are intended by God for husbands and wives, not unmarried persons, whether of the same or opposite sex.

Like unmarried people with a heterosexual orientation, people with a homosexual orientation must learn self-control and chastity (CCC 359). All unmarried people, whether homosexual or heterosexual, should develop virtue, rely on God's grace to live morally, and avoid situations that will cause temptation to sin (2 Cor 12:7–10; Mt 5:29–30; CCC 2345).

The Church officially teaches in its document *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered." It further states that "special concern and pastoral attention should be directed toward those who have this condition [of homosexual orientation], lest they be led to believe that the living out of this orientation in homosexual activity is a morally acceptable option. It is not" (Article 3; see also CCC 2357).

Scripture clearly condemns homosexual activity: "Therefore, God handed them over to their degrading passions. Their females exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the males likewise gave up natural relations with females and burned with lust for one another. Males did shameful things with one another and thus received in their own persons the due penalty for their perversity" (Rom 1:26–27). Other verses include Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Genesis 19:1-29, 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, and 1 Timothy 1:10.

The Bible teaches that the sexual differences between men and women are divinely willed (Gn 1:27–28, 2:24, 5:2; CCC 1604–5). Man and woman are to become "one flesh" in marriage. The phrase "one flesh" refers to more than just the act of sex – it encompasses the "two-fold" purpose of marriage: the unity of the spouses and the transmission of new life (CCC 2363). A baby, therefore, is the intended result of the two becoming one. Homosexual sex can never result in a baby; it can never fully achieve the "one flesh" that human sexuality is intended by God to achieve. Therefore, homosexual acts are contrary to the natural moral law and are, therefore, objectively immoral (CCC 2357).

While there are factors that can diminish a person's blameworthiness for homosexual acts, nothing can ever make homosexual acts morally acceptable. Pastoral care and compassion should always be extended to those suffering from homosexual tendencies. Those interested in more information should read *The Truth About Homosexuality* by Fr. John Harvey, O.S.F.S. (Ignatius Press).