

## A teaching that is disordered

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When Cardinal Francis George of Chicago released a statement Feb. 5 discrediting New Ways Ministry, which describes itself as a "gay-positive ministry" ([see story](#) [1]), he was, indeed, standing on a solid foundation of church teaching, even if it contains some of the most noxious sentiments one might imagine using about another human being.

In 1975, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in a "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics," outlined an approach to homosexuality that distinguished between "the homosexual condition or tendency and individual homosexual actions," the latter described as "intrinsically disordered."

Eleven years later, the same congregation felt compelled to speak exclusively about homosexuality in a letter to the U.S. bishops "on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons" that ratcheted up the previous position, noting that in the aftermath of that earlier declaration "an overly benign interpretation was given to the homosexual condition itself, some going so far as to call it neutral, or even good." To dispel such notions, the congregation made it clear that while "the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil, and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."

It is becoming more apparent each year that the church eventually will have to confront the reality of homosexuality -- the experience of individuals and families and the growing understanding by human science of different sexual orientations -- with something more credible than dehumanizing phrases.

Calling someone "intrinsically disordered" may serve to fit them into a neat theological container, but it is a useless and insulting designation to those who know their children or friends as whole and healthy humans who have much to offer life in general, and each other, not least committed and long-term love.

New Ways Ministries for decades has been a responsible and reasonable advocate for justice for gays and lesbians in the church and wider society. Sadly, the church in this instance continues to reflect the worst instincts of the secular culture, insisting on widening the breach between itself and our homosexual brothers and sisters and offering little in the way of human understanding.

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