

Vatican sources suspect Pope Francis was distancing himself from CDF statement on same-sex unions in address



Was Pope Francis alluding to the [recent statement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith](#) that said [priests could not give blessings to same-sex unions](#) because "God cannot bless sin," when he spoke at the Angelus today, March 21? Informed sources in Rome told **America** they believe he was, but they did not wish to be identified since they were not authorized to comment.

They noted that when commenting on the Gospel of the day, which recounts that some Greeks wanted "to see Jesus," Pope Francis said many people today also want to see, to meet and to know Jesus, and so

"we Christians and our communities" have "the great responsibility" to make this possible by "the witness of a life that is given in service, a life that takes upon itself the style of God: closeness, compassion and tenderness."

Francis explained that this "means sowing seeds of love, not with fleeting words but through concrete, simple and courageous examples; not with theoretical condemnations but with gestures of love." He added that "then the Lord, with his grace, makes us bear fruit, even when the soil is dry due to misunderstandings, difficulty or persecution or claims of legalism or clerical moralism. This is barren soil. Precisely then, in trials and in solitude, while the seed is dying, that is the moment in which life blossoms, to bear ripe fruit in due time."

He said that "it is in this intertwining of death and life that we can experience the joy and true fruitfulness of love, which always, I repeat, is given in God's style: closeness, compassion, tenderness."

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According to three sources, it was significant that Francis called on Christians and the church to give witness to Jesus "not with theoretical condemnations but with gestures of love" and that he speaks about "misunderstandings, difficulty or persecution or claims of legalism or clerical moralism" as "barren soil." They noted that [many people had read the C.D.F. document as judgmental or condemnatory](#) and saw it as marked by much "legalism and clericalism," far from the pastoral spirit of Francis, even though the document also had positive aspects. The sources suggested that with his remarks today, Pope Francis appeared to be distancing himself to some extent from the C.D.F. statement—to which he gave "assent to its publication" before his visit to Iraq.

One senior Vatican source, who asked not to be named because he was not authorized to comment publicly, said, "the three words—'closeness, compassion, tenderness'—that Pope Francis repeats speak to the heart of every father and mother, of every spiritual father and mother." He said, "They are the true blessing of the church and its shepherd for every person, for every situation." Moreover, he added, "They are the true measure of the very magisterium [i.e., the teaching authority of the Church] when it enlightens consciences and guides the faithful. Every '*responsum*' [i.e., official magisterial answer] and the doctrine in which it is couched should rise to that measure."

Given the controversy that has followed the publication of the C.D.F. statement, sources in Rome told **America** they would not be surprised if the pope were to return to the whole question more explicitly at some future date.

[Full Text of the Angelus Address](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Buongiorno!

On this Fifth Sunday of Lent, the liturgy proclaims the Gospel in which Saint John refers to an episode that occurred in the final days of Christ's life, shortly before the Passion (cf. Jn 12:20-33). While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, several Greeks, curious because of what he had been doing, express the wish to see him. They approach the apostle Philip and say to him: "We wish to see Jesus" (v. 21). "We wish to see Jesus". Let us remember this: "We wish to see Jesus". Philip tells Andrew and then together they report it to the Teacher. In the request of those Greeks we can glimpse the request that many men and women, of every place and every time, pose to the Church and also to each one of us: "We wish to see Jesus".

And how does Jesus respond to that request? In a way that makes us think. He says: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.... Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (vv. 23-24). These words do not seem to respond to the request those Greeks made. In reality, they surpass it. In fact, Jesus reveals that for every man and woman who wants to find him, He is the hidden seed ready to die in order to bear much fruit. As if to say: if you wish to know me, if you wish to understand me, look at the grain of wheat that dies in soil, that is, look at the cross.

The sign of the Cross comes to mind, which over the centuries has become the symbol par excellence of Christians. Even today, those who wish to "see Jesus", perhaps coming from countries and cultures where Christianity is not well-known, what do they see first? What is the most common sign they encounter? The Crucifix, the Cross. In churches, in the homes of Christians, even worn on their persons. The important thing is that the sign be consistent with the Gospel: the cross cannot but express love, service, unreserved self-giving: only in this way is it truly the "tree of life", of overabundant life.

Today too, many people, often without saying so, implicitly would like to "see Jesus", to meet him, to know him. This is how we understand the great responsibility we Christians and of our communities have. We too must respond with the witness of a life that is given in service, a life that takes upon itself the style of God – closeness, compassion and tenderness – and is given in service. It means sowing seeds of love, not with fleeting words but through concrete, simple and courageous examples, not with theoretical condemnations, but with gestures of love. Then the Lord, with his grace, makes us bear fruit, even when the soil is dry due to misunderstandings, difficulty or persecution, or claims of legalism or clerical moralism. This is barren soil. Precisely then, in trials and in solitude, while the seed is dying, that is the moment in which life blossoms, to bear ripe fruit in due time. It is in this intertwining of death

and life that we can experience the joy and true fruitfulness of love, which always, I repeat, is given in God's style: closeness, compassion, tenderness.

May the Virgin Mary help us to follow Jesus, to walk, strong and joyful, on the path of service, so that the love of Christ may shine in our every attitude and become more and more the style of our daily life

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