

In the last few days, some statements contained in the documentary *Francesco* by the director Evgeny Afineevsky have given rise to various reactions and interpretations. We are making available to you some points we hope you will find useful to help people understand correctly what the Holy Father said.

In an interview he gave more than a year ago, Pope Francis answered two separate questions at different times, but they have been edited and published as a single answer, without being put into context in the way they should have been, and this has created confusion. In the first place, the Holy Father had made a *pastoral reference* to the need for homosexually oriented sons or daughters not to suffer discrimination within their own families. That is what these words refer to: "Las personas homosexuales tienen derecho a estar en familia. No se puede echar de la familia a nadie ni hacerle la vida imposible por eso" (Homosexual persons have a right to be part of a family. You cannot throw someone out of the family or make his or her life impossible for that).

The following section from the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Amoris Lætitia* on the family can shed some light on these expressions: "During the Synod, we discussed the situation of families whose members include persons who experience same-sex attraction, a situation not easy either for parents or for children. We would like before all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while 'every sign of unjust discrimination' is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence. Such families should be given respectful pastoral guidance, so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives" (§ 250).

A later question in the interview was related to a local law ten years ago in Argentina on "matrimonios igualitarios de parejas del mismo sexo" (equal marriages of same-sex couples) and the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires' opposition to it. Pope Francis said about this that "es una incongruencia hablar de matrimonio homosexual" (it is inconsistent to speak of homosexual marriage) and he added that, in precisely this context, he had spoken about these people's right to be covered legally: "lo que tenemos que hacer es una ley de convivencia civil; tienen derecho a estar cubiertos legalmente. Yo defendí eso" (what we need to have is a law of civil partnership; they have a right to be covered by the law. I defended that).

The Holy Father said this in an interview in 2014: "Marriage is between a man and a woman. Secular states want to justify civil unions to regulate different situations of people who live together, driven by the need to regulate financial matters between persons, for example ensuring health care. It is about agreements on various kinds of living together, of which there are so many I would not be able to list them. We have to look at different cases and evaluate them in all their variety".

It is clear, therefore, that Pope Francis was referring to particular state arrangements, and certainly not to Church doctrine, which has been re-stated various times through the years.