

ARCHBISHOP RINO FISICHELLA: THE CHURCH MUST EMBRACE PEOPLE “LIKE A MOTHER, NOT LIKE A JUDGE”



“I have an idea on how to break the deadlock...” Archbishop Rino Fisichella, a theologian and President of the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelisation, opens up to the possibility of “different solutions” for wounded families and recalls that what the Church wants is to embrace everyone “like a mother, not like a judge”.

WILL THE CHURCH MODIFY ITS DOCTRINE ON MARRIAGE?

“I haven’t heard one single speech that calls the indissolubility of marriage into question. The dilemma is a pastoral one: how to welcome people without excluding anyone, whilst remaining faithful to Jesus’ teaching, in a world in which there is a great divide between dominant cultural trends and the Christian idea of the family.”

SOME HAVE ENCOURAGED [THE SYNOD] TO RECOGNISE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF CIVIL MARRIAGE.

“The doctrine is examined and developed, without being altered. Regarding the subject of conscience and religious freedom, the Second Vatican Council has made the Church take a leap forward. Civil marriage does not mean living together, these are two different things. What has emerged from the Synod is a method of discussion: none of us claims to possess

the truth but as John Paul II taught us, once a truth is discovered, it is just another phase which pushes us further.”

WOULD YOU READMIT REMARRIED DIVORCEES TO THE EUCHARIST IN CERTAIN CASES?

“I don’t want to start judging and theorising based on specific cases. But who in today’s world can say they have not had cases of members of their own families living together or divorcing? Unfortunately, we are immersed in a reality in which the beauty of marriage has been wounded. There has been too much emphasis on the Canonist, or legal, dimension of marriage, which has led us often into the waters of legalism. Recuperating the sacramental dimension would make it easier to find different solutions, in continuity with original doctrine. Here we return to the primacy of conscience. Nothing and no one can intervene in this. Of course, it must be a conscience that is illuminated by the Word of God, that is reflected upon and that accepts the obedience of a path.”

HOW CAN DOCTRINE BE COMBINED WITH A FOCUS ON CERTAIN SITUATIONS?

“I have an idea on how to break the deadlock. There are examples in the New Testament which I have not heard anyone quote. Jesus says sins against the Son of Man will be forgiven. I think this refers to the sins of ignorance. We need to work out what these sins are, sins which are committed without the person even realising it. Then there is St. Paul: he gave orders for a person who was in an incestuous relationship to be cast out of the community as incest is a grave sin. But in the second letter to the Corinthians he speaks again about the case, saying: you must embrace him once again so that he no longer suffers the weight of sadness and so that we are not overcome by Satan. How can we ensure we are not overcome by Satan, the one who divides us? We don’t know how this man went on to live but Paul says that the community must offer “consolation”. This could help guide us in marrying the principles of the Church and the real life of communities.”

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Is there a problem regarding the treatment of remarried divorcees?

“Some forms of senseless discrimination do exist. Why should remarried divorcees who are active members of the community not be given the opportunity to teach in a Catholic school?”

At the Synod, one couple spoke about how a family should act toward gay sons and daughters...

“I have had a chance to speak to families who experience these kinds of situations. I try to explain to them that the Church cannot recognise marriage between people of the same sex but it embraces everyone like a mother, not like a judge.”

