News



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Pope Francis' new choice to lead the Vatican's influential doctrinal office says that questions surrounding blessings for gay couples must be further studied.

"If a blessing is given in such a way that it does not cause that confusion, it will have to be analyzed and confirmed," said Archbishop Víctor Manuel Fernández, in a July 5 interview with InfoVaticana, a Catholic news website in Spain.



Archbishop Víctor Manuel Fernández, appointed prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith by Pope Francis July 1, is pictured in this file photo at the conclusion of extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family at the Vatican Oct. 18, 2014. (CNS/Paul Haring)

At the same time, however, Fernández offered a strong defense of the church's traditional teaching on marriage as being between a man and a woman capable of producing new life.

"There is nothing that can be compared to that and using that name to express something else is not good or correct," he said.

"I believe that gestures or actions that may express something different should be avoided. That is why I think that the greatest care that must be taken is to avoid rites or blessings that could feed this confusion," he continued. "Now, if a blessing is given in such a way that it does not cause that confusion, it will have to be analyzed and confirmed."

Fernández — who was appointed to the role on July 1 and will begin service in mid-September — expressed concern that any stance not to confuse the church's teaching on marriage. But he appeared open to reconsidering a question that the Vatican office that he will soon head ruled in 2021 to be out of the question.

In March 2021, the Vatican's then-Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a two-page decree saying that the Catholic Church cannot bless same-sex unions since God "cannot bless sin." The decree was approved by the pope.

Earlier this year, however, Catholic bishops in Germany voted to authorize same-sex blessings, and the question of integrating LGBTQ Catholics into the church is expected to be among the topics discussed at October's Synod of Bishops at the Vatican.

The appointment of Fernández — a fellow Argentinian and longtime close theological adviser to Francis — has set off shockwaves among conservative Catholics.

But in his InfoVaticana interview, Fernández said that he believes Catholic "doctrine does not change."

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He also used the interview to express his firm opposition to abortion, saying that "I challenge you to find someone in Latin America who has written more articles against abortion than I have."

In naming Fernández to the post, Francis also signaled he was seeking a new direction for the Vatican office that is tasked with defending the church's teaching. In a letter to Fernández, the pope criticized what he described as the "immoral"

methods it had previously used, including investigating and silencing theologians.

Fernández, in his July 5 interview, said he intends to "learn from history."

"I will respect the processes, I will dialogue, but I will do it in my own way," he said.

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