

Europe

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SERVICES

OMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

The thought of the Church

European Parliament resolution in the eyes of a theologian

With 430 votes in favour, 105 against and 59 abstentions, on May 24 the European Parliament approved a resolution on "Homophobia in Europe". The document contains denunciation of laws, acts of discrimination and homophobia in countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Lithuania, Latvia and Hungary, but it also contains non-sharable statements such as the one those claiming that the fundamental rights of homosexuals "would be best protected if access were granted to juridical institutions such as cohabitation, registered unions or marriage". Also the endorsement of the fact that "16 Member States offer these opportunities" along with the invitation to other EU countries "to take these institutions into consideration", are thorny claims. As known, the resolution lacks legislative value but it corresponds to a political orientation of the Assembly. It signals the spread of a specific trend throughout Europe and it appears as an attempt of "lobbying" on Member States on a subject – the family – which doesn't fall within EU area of activity. To clarify the question, from the perspective of Church thought and teaching, often unjustly accused of homophobia, Giovanna Pasqualin Traversa interviewed for SIR Europe Msgr. **Mauro Cozzoli**, Professor of Moral Theology at the Pontifical Lateran University.

How do you judge this resolution?

"The document triggers a twofold reflection, the first, inspired to sharing, the second to concern. Firstly, all forms of fear, hatred, violence, of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation are blameworthy. Every human being is a person. As such, man has a value 'for himself', owing to his human nature: his worth is the result of what he 'is' and not for 'the way he is', namely, his sexual orientation. This means that the gay, the Lesbian, the bisexual, the transgender must be acknowledged the dignity and the respect that belong to all human persons and thus all forms of discrimination must be countered and denounced as detrimental of human dignity. This must happen not only on the plane of judgement and moral denouncement but also as regards the respect for the rule of the law and legal provisions".

What are the reasons of your "concern"?

"The Resolution triggers perplexities when, in acknowledging the right of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender as deserving full respect it upholds the recognition of presumed rights, like the right to marriage and parenthood".

A leitmotif of the document is the term "discrimination"...

"As it is presented, this concept is ambiguous. Failing to acknowledge the dignity and the respect of an individual is an act of discrimination that must be condemned and prevented. Such dignity and respect represent a true right of the individual. But preventing the possibility of marriage and parenthood isn't an act of discrimination because they both are established by natural law, defined by nature and not by the will or opinions of individuals. Marriage is the stable union of a man and a woman on which marriage is based, thus parenthood. Without communion, complementariness and procreativity between man and woman, homosexual unions cannot claim their right to marriage and parenthood".

The exclusion of this right is not an act of discrimination...

"No. In fact, it's an act of protection and respect for the truth that does not depend on individual discretion and options since it regulates and directs individual choices. There are truths and goods that no legislator could deny. A right is not the result of a wish. Nor is it the result of democratic consensus or procedural correctness. It is the result of the nature of individuals and of the relations that bind them. This is the reason why the resolution cannot – in the name of the fight on homophobia – force legislators to draw up laws that are drifts from nature, nor forbid dissent on opinions and legislations in favour of homosexual marriage and parenthood. If not, political powers would be violating the freedom of conscience of their citizens. These are the lines of thought of Church teaching, based on the distinction between homosexual persons and homosexual acts".

There ensues that it would be wrong to accuse the Church of homophobia...

"Indeed. People – states the Catechism of the Catholic Church – must be welcomed with respect, compassion and kindness. To their regard all forms of unjust discrimination will be carefully prevented" (n. 2358). Homosexual acts are described as 'intrinsic disorders. They go against natural law. They preclude the gift of life from homosexual acts. They are not the fruit of a true affective and sexual complementariness. In no case they can be approved' (n. 2357)".