

Cardinal Burke: ‘I’m Praying Very Fervently That This Coming Year This Confusion Will Stop’

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By [Terence P. Jeffrey](#)

(CNSNews.com) - Cardinal Raymond Burke, the Prefect of the Sacred Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the highest court of the Catholic Church, said in an interview with CNSNews.com recorded Friday that he sees “a very serious responsibility to try to correct as quickly and as effectively as possible the scandal caused by the midterm report” that was published during the synod of bishops discussing the family that met in Rome earlier this month.

In the interview, Burke discussed Catholic teaching on marriage, homosexuality and the rights of children.

“We have to recognize that if we don’t get it right about marriage--in other words, if we’re not faithful to the word of Christ, to the truth which Christ announced to us about marriage--in the church, I don’t know how people can trust us with regard to teaching the truth of the faith in any other matter,” Burke said.

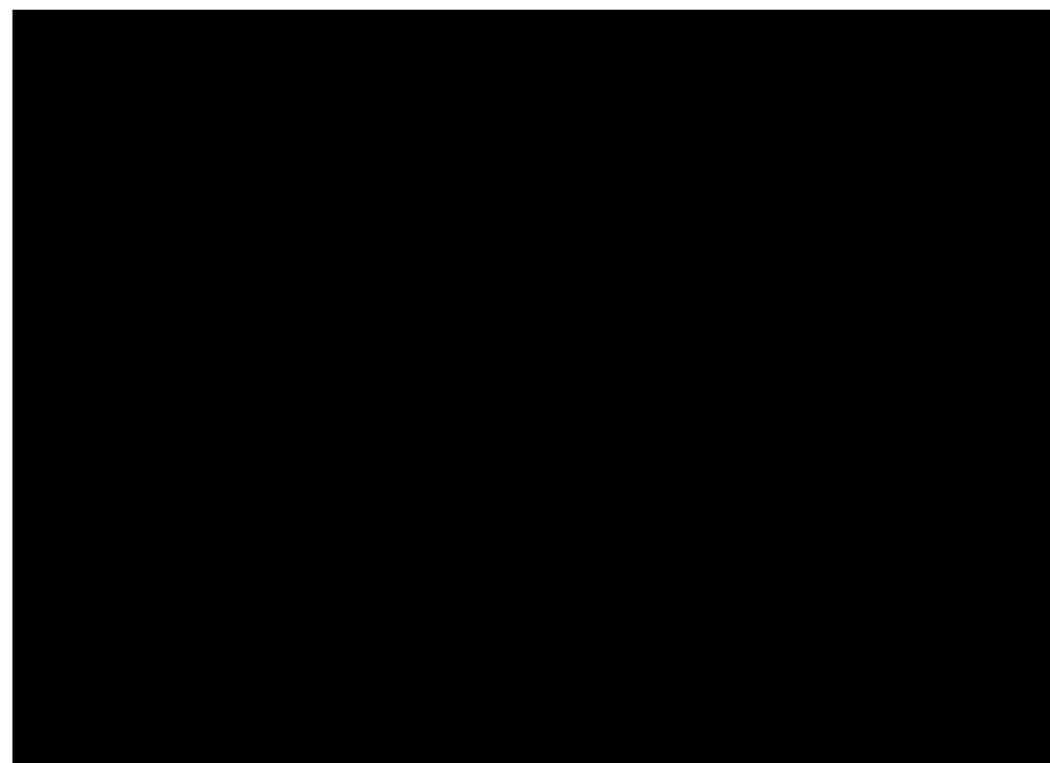
“We’re talking here about the very foundation of the life of the church, the first cell of our life, in the marital union and the formation of the family,” he said, “and if we don’t uphold the sanctity of the marital bond we have really not only abandoned the Catholic faith but really abandoned the Christian faith in the sense that we are abandoning the natural law itself.”

At the end of the interview, Cardinal Burke said that the church needs to once again clearly proclaim its teachings on marriage and sexuality and noted that it has already produced many texts explaining these teachings.

“The church must now in this period hold up the beauty, the splendor, of this teaching for the sake of her own members that they not be confused about the truth but also for the sake of our world and the church’s call to serve the world by proclaiming the truth and by giving witness to it,” he said.

“And, so, I’m praying very fervently that this coming year that this confusion will stop and instead that there will begin to be a strong emphasis on the beauty of the truth of the church’s teaching on marriage and on human life and human sexuality,” he said.

Here is a complete recording and transcript of CNSNews.com’s interview with Cardinal Burke:



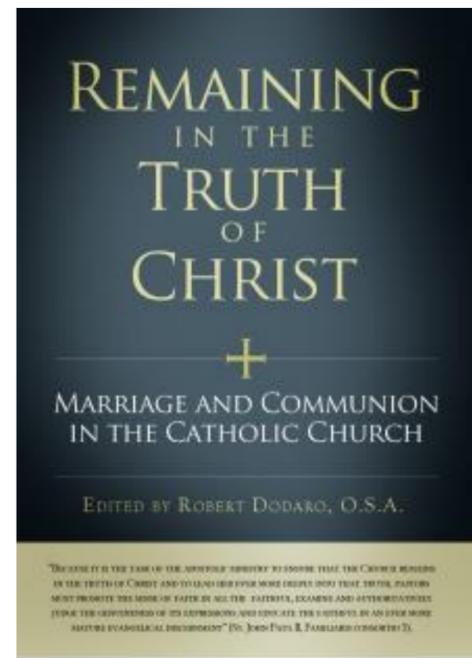
Terence P. Jeffrey: Hi. Welcome to this edition of Online with Terry Jeffrey. Our guest today is Cardinal Raymond Burke, a native of Wisconsin.

He earned both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in philosophy from the Catholic University of America. He then earned a master’s degree in theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and then a doctorate in canon law from that university. In 1975, Pope Paul VI ordained Cardinal Burke a priest in a ceremony at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. He’s been the bishop of La Crosse, Wisconsin, and the Archbishop of St. Louis, Missouri.

In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI named him Prefect for the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the Supreme Court of the Catholic Church.

In 2009, Pope Benedict assigned Burke to membership in the Congregation for Bishops, the group that oversees the appointment of bishops.

In 2010, Pope Benedict elevated Burke to cardinal.



Cardinal Burke is now a contributor to a book published by Ignatius Press: [Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church](#). The book rebuts some of the ideas being advanced by Cardinal Walter Kasper of Germany in regard to marriage and divorce. Some have been trying to advance Kasper's ideas in the Extraordinary Synod of the Bishops that focuses on the family that has been called by Pope Francis.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, Remaining in the Truth of Christ includes an early chapter analyzing the scriptural basis of marriage that was written by Fr. Paul Mankowski, S.J. Let me give you a couple of biblical quotes taken from the New American Bible [as posted by the U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops](#).

Genesis 2:24 says: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body."

Mark Chapter 10 says: "The Pharisees approached and asked, 'Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?' They were testing him.

"He said to them in reply, "What did Moses command you?"

"They replied, 'Moses permitted him to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her.'

"But Jesus told them, 'Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother [and be joined to his wife], and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.'

"In the house, the disciples again questioned him about this. He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'"

Jeffrey: I want to ask you, Your Eminence, a very basic question. Was Jesus right about marriage?

Cardinal Burke: Absolutely. His saving mission to restore us to communion with God the Father--that communion which had been broken by the sin of Adam and Eve--had as one of its fundamental aspects the restoration of the truth of marriage and the fidelity to that truth in the life of a husband and a wife. And so Our Lord in His teaching makes reference to creation itself, in other words to that order which God has placed in the world and in the human heart by which a man and a woman are attracted to one another to form a lifelong, faithful and procreative union, that Our Lord makes it very clear that this is the truth about marriage, that there is no other truth about marriage, that that is the whole truth.

And it was so clear that the disciples questioned him about it because they were struck. They said: Well, maybe it's better not to marry. And Our Lord makes it clear that God the Father gives the grace to those who are called to marriage to live this wonderful sacrament and to live this mystery which reflects in a very particular way the love within the Trinity, which is also faithful, enduring, and fruitful. So, we see that in Our Lord's saving work that one of the most important aspects was to restore marriage to its truth.

Jeffrey: Given that it was Jesus Christ Himself who taught us what marriage is, can any priest or bishop overrule or change what Jesus declared about marriage?

Cardinal Burke: No, absolutely not. The priests and bishops are called to be faithful to the truth. Our office is to teach this truth and to assist the faithful to live it, but we can never even under some supposed pastoral approach either alter or deny the truth about marriage.

Jeffrey: Can the Pope himself change the nature of marriage given what Christ said?

Cardinal Burke: No, it's not within his power, and this is very clear in the teaching of the church that if a marriage has been validly celebrated and consummated it cannot be separated. It cannot be ended by anything except death itself.

Jeffrey: And the institution of marriage and the way it's recognized by the church can that be changed by any bishop or any pope?

Cardinal Burke: No. No, because the church in this matter is following both the natural law and the divinely revealed law. As you've pointed out, these words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, and there's no respectable scriptural scholar who questions that these are the very words of Our Lord and the text of the scripture makes clear that what Our Lord seems to be saying, indeed He was saying because his own disciples recognized that this was a hard thing, that this was a calling of the married to an heroic way of life, but a life true to their calling.

Jeffrey: It may have been an inconvenient truth, but it was the truth.

Cardinal Burke: Exactly.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence in the [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) as posted on the website of the Vatican there's a section that's called "[To Bear Witness to the Truth](#)." And it says this, it says: "Before Pilate, Christ proclaims that He 'has come into the world to bear witness to the truth.' The Christian is not to 'be ashamed then of testifying to Our Lord.' And it goes on to say, "The duty of Christians to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as witnesses of the Gospel and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of the faith in words and deeds. Witness is an act of justice that establishes the truth or makes it known."

Now, it seems to me that one historical-- the Catechism goes on to say that we've seen martyrs who throughout the history of the church have given up their lives because they bore witness to the truth, when it was not just inconvenient but deadly for them to do so.

And one example is Saint John Fisher who was an English bishop in the 16th century in the time of King Henry VIII. King Henry VIII, his wife Catherine of Aragon had not borne him a surviving male heir so he wanted to set her aside, divorce her, and marry Ann Boleyn. The [Catholic Encyclopedia describes what Saint John Fisher did](#) as follows. They say: "When the question of Henry's divorce from Queen Catherine arose Fisher became the queen's chief supporter and most trusted counselor. In this capacity he appeared on the Queen's behalf in the legate's court where he startled his hearers by the directness of his language and most of all by declaring that, like Saint John the Baptist,

he was ready to die on behalf of the indissolubility of marriage."

Henry VIII went on to sever himself from the Catholic Church and declare himself the supreme authority over the Church of England which Saint John Fisher refused to recognize and was therefore martyred by Henry VIII.

Did Cardinal Fisher do the right thing by saying he would stand on his life in defense of the indissolubility of marriage?

Cardinal Burke: Absolutely. No priest, no bishop, and no Roman pontiff could do less. In other words, to betray the indissolubility of marriage which King Henry VIII was asking him to do would have been to betray his Catholic faith and he could not do that and Our Lord gave him the grace to be a martyr. He even made reference to Saint John the Baptist, who during Jesus' own public ministry gave this heroic witness to the indissolubility of marriage by making clear to Herod that he was living in public and grave sin by living as a husband with his own brother's wife who obviously was bound to marriage to his brother.

Jeffrey: Should Cardinal Fisher be a model to Catholic priests and laymen today?

Cardinal Burke: Well, he certainly is for me. From the time I became a bishop, I have given special study to his life. But he's a model for all priests and bishops and the lay faithful. Of course, as you know, Saint Thomas More, a layman, a married man, was one with him in the martyrdom because he too refused to support Henry VIII in his pretense to be the supreme head of the church in order to give himself the license to "marry" someone in quotation marks when he was already married to Catherine of Aragon.

Jeffrey: You know, Your Eminence, about fifty years or so ago Hollywood actually made a movie about Saint Thomas More, A Man for All Seasons, that depicted what happened to Saint Thomas More and held him up as a great cultural hero. And I think in those days--we're talking about the 1960s in the United States--the idea that a person might have to sacrifice their life in Western Civilization because they stood up against the authority of the state in defending the institution of marriage and the moral authority of the church seemed shocking. Does it seem so shocking today?

Cardinal Burke: No, it doesn't and that's how far, in a short period of time, how much we have descended and gone away from the truth of our faith and the truth of the moral law in society in general. But the fact that these kinds of questions are being seriously discussed in the church should shock us all and awaken us to the need today to give an heroic witness to the truth of the indissolubility of marriage from attacks from within the church herself.

Jeffrey: From within the church itself. As you know, many of the bishops in England did not stand with Saint John Fisher. They went with the king.

Cardinal Burke: No, the majority did. In fact, Fisher was the only bishop. Now, later there were many who gave heroic witness and lay faithful and priests and so forth. But at that time Fisher stood pretty much alone.

Jeffrey: Do you think there's a threat or a risk that in the near future the Catholic Church may face another such situation even in Western nations, where some leaders of the Church, some bishops, decide to side with Caesar rather than with God? Take the side against the truth of the Church? Is there a risk of that?

Cardinal Burke: I think that's a real challenge today and perhaps not coming from the state so much as from the culture in general, the general acceptance, the widespread acceptance of divorce and remarriage, and now the Catholic Church which is practically the only institution which stands for the truth about marriage, for the indissolubility of marriage, now she's asked to compromise herself in this matter.

And, so, we have to recognize that if we don't get it right about marriage--in other words, if we're not faithful to the word of Christ, to the truth which Christ announced to us about marriage--in the church, I don't know how people can trust us with regard to teaching the truth of the faith in any other matter. I mean, we're talking here about the very foundation of the life of the church, the first cell of our life, in the marital union and the formation of the family; and if we don't uphold the sanctity of the marital bond we have really not only abandoned the Catholic faith but really abandoned the Christian faith in the sense that we are abandoning the natural law itself.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, let me ask you in relation to this about another aspect of the Catechism, which calls for [respect for the souls of others](#) and talks about the sin of scandal.

It says: "Scandal is an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil. The person who gives scandal becomes his neighbor's tempter. He damages virtue and integrity, he may even draw his brother into spiritual death. Scandal is a grave offense if by deed or omission another is deliberately led into a grave offense. Scandal takes on a particular gravity by reason of the authority of those who cause it or the weakness of those who are scandalized. Scandal is grave when given by those who by nature or office are obliged to teach and educate others. Jesus reproaches the Scribes and Pharisees on this account: He likens them to wolves in sheep's clothing. ... Anyone who uses the power at his disposal in such a way that it leads others to do wrong becomes guilty of scandal and responsible for the evil that he has directly or indirectly encouraged."

Do you think that some of the bishop who were participating in the synod and were pushing the Catholic Church away from Christ's teaching on marriage were at risk of committing scandal?

Cardinal Burke: Well, certainly it happened with the publication of the midterm report from the synod. A scandal was caused in the church. The secular media, not without reason, referred to it as an earthquake in the church. While some bishops and others excused it saying well this wasn't a doctrinal statement, it was just a report of what was being discussed in the synod, the very fact that these matters were being discussed and questioned by the presidents of the conferences of bishops, by the heads of the dicasteries of the Roman Curia, and by other special appointees of the Holy Father to the synod caused a tremendous confusion and could even induce the faithful into error with regard to the teaching about marriage and other teachings.

And so to me this was a very serious responsibility to try to correct as quickly and as effectively as possible the scandal caused by the midterm report.

I remember one bishop in our small group, we met then right after the reading of the midterm report and he said: "How can I go home to my people carrying this message to them?"

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, let me be specific on part of that. In the midterm report--[the initial text that was released](#)--it had a section called

Positive Aspects of Civil Unions and Cohabitation.” It said: “A new sensitivity in today’s pastoral consists in grasping the positive reality of civil weddings and, having pointed out our differences, of cohabitation. It is necessary that in the ecclesial proposal, while clearly presenting the ideal, we also indicate the constructive elements in those situations that do not yet or no longer correspond to that ideal.”

Was that specific statement scandalous?

Cardinal Burke: I believe that it was because how can you say that there are positive elements in an act which is gravely sinful, namely to engage in the marriage act when you’re not married?

There can’t be any positive element to that. It’s against the divine, natural and revealed law. Simply, our only response--while we love the sinner, as we’ve always said we love the sinner and hate the sin—but we need to draw the person in the sin away from the sin and to a conversion of life. But to tell them that there are positive elements in the way they’re living, this is simply, it’s a contradiction. It doesn’t make any sense. It’s either gravely sinful or it’s not. I mean, this is the principle of non-contradiction. It’s fundamental logic.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, inside the synod when the bishops and cardinals were discussing what would be said and how the church ought to deal with these things, were there actually cardinals and bishops arguing for this position that the church ought to say that cohabitation has positive aspects? Were there in fact people standing up and saying this is the way the church should go?

Cardinal Burke: Well, the fact that it was declared in the midterm report means that there, at least one person, the person who wrote that text, was holding that position and the person who wrote the text must have thought that he was expressing the thinking of other cardinals and bishops. For my own part, I don’t even like to think that there were any significant number of cardinals or bishops who actually subscribe to that thinking.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, my sense, and you can correct me if I’m wrong, from reading statements of the church from encyclical letters to any other type of formal document, pastoral letters, that have been published by previous popes and by the church that they are extremely carefully thought through and well-vetted documents that stand the test of time but more importantly they’re clearly rooted in the scripture and the inalterable teachings of the church. Am I right about that?

Cardinal Burke: Yes, absolutely. In fact, when an objection was raised to the publication of the midterm report after it was heard, the response was: Well, we’ve always published the midterm report. And my response to that was: Yes, I’ve taken part I think in four or five synods of bishops, and those midterm reports were always thoroughly rooted in the sacred scriptures and in the constant teaching of the church and, therefore, I was pleased that they were published to give a correct expression of what the synod was trying to do. But I viewed this document as--it was not grounded in the sacred scriptures and certainly not grounded in the constant teaching of the church. And in the small groups what happened was there was a very hardworking effort to try to bring the Magisterium--for instance in the exhortation of St. John Paul II’s, *Familiaris Consortio*--to bring that into the text in order to correct it.

Jeffrey: How was that stopped? How was it possible for a document like this that so clearly seems to contradict or bring into question inalterable teachings of the Catholic Church, how did it happen that that was produced and even posted by the Vatican?

Cardinal Burke: I don’t know how to explain that to you. I’m being very sincere. It sent me into a state of shock to be honest with you. And the Relator General, who is a cardinal whom I’ve known for more than thirty years, in a press conference--I’m not revealing anything that was confidential--in a press conference, when he was asked, for instance, what the about some of these statements, he turned to one of the other bishops present there and said you explain it, you wrote it. In other words, it wasn’t his text.

Jeffrey: Even though he was technically responsible for it those weren’t his words or his views.

Cardinal Burke: That’s a very grave situation. I mean, that whole, that’s to me, it’s just profoundly disturbing. And I don’t know, I can’t explain it to you. I’m sorry but I can’t.

Jeffrey: I understand, Your Eminence. But your sense from talking to your brother bishops and cardinals about what happened here, is your sense that the vast majority of them share your concern, understand why the document was problematic and the way it was produced was problematic?

Cardinal Burke: I can’t say the vast majority because I didn’t talk to the vast majority. I can say to you a number, very serious-minded cardinals and bishops with whom I spoke, certainly shared my view of the situation and were very, very deeply disturbed about it. The voting on some of the paragraphs that were still left in in the final report indicates that there were a significant number of cardinals and bishops who remain very concerned that those texts, the texts on the giving of Holy Communion to those who are in irregular unions and giving them access to penance and to the Holy Eucharist and also the texts which were confusing with regard to cohabitation and the homosexual condition indicates that there were a good number of bishops who found this unacceptable. And we don’t, you can’t say because you don’t know what’s in the mind of all the other bishops who maybe didn’t vote to take out the paragraph but you don’t know what exactly they may have been thinking about it.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, in the Catechism which--

Cardinal Burke: In any case, what I would like to say if I may is that this is not, these are not questions that are submitted to a Democratic vote, not even of bishops. I mean, this is the constant teaching of the church and the only role of the bishops in the synod is to illustrate and to hold up and to present this to the world. So, I just wanted to make that point.

Jeffrey: Right. The Catholic bishops and cardinals cannot--If 99.9 percent of them voted and denied what Christ said about marriage, they would be wrong and they couldn’t change what He said.

Cardinal Burke: That’s right. And we had that situation in England at the time of Henry VIII, where you had a martyr, Bishop Cardinal John Fisher, and you had the great majority of the other bishops holding the opposite position. But he stood for the truth, and they betrayed their episcopal office.

Jeffrey: But it is extraordinarily confusing to Catholics and perhaps particularly young Catholics that are going through their formation in faith to hear a prince of the church question the church’s teaching on marriage or homosexual behavior.

Cardinal Burke: Absolutely. I understand and I just, what I say to people who bring this to my attention or express their tremendous grief and confusion, I just keep referring them to the constant teaching of the church, to the Catechism, to [Familiaris Consortio](#), and tell them that

that stands that cannot change and, therefore, although this is inexcusable behavior, it can happen and we have to simply hold to the truth in our own lives and also give witness to it in the world.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, [the Catechism also says](#) that “under no circumstances” can homosexual acts be approved. And it goes on to say that “the number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial,” and it goes on to say that people who have that orientation are called to a chaste life.

Now, can any priest, bishop, or pope change what the catechism says about homosexual acts never being, you can never approve them, and that the orientation is objectively disordered? Can that be changed?

Cardinal Burke: No, it’s not possible, it’s part of the natural moral law and it’s obviously also then part of the Magisterium of the Church. No, that can’t be changed.

Jeffrey: The pope himself cannot change that teaching?

Cardinal Burke: No. No, no.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, in that midterm report it also said: “Homosexuals have gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community: are we capable of welcoming these people, guaranteeing to them a fraternal space in our communities? Often they wish to encounter a Church that offers them a welcoming home. Are our communities capable of providing that, and accepting and valuing their sexual orientation, without compromising Catholic doctrine on family and matrimony? ... Without denying the moral problems connected with sexual unions, it has to be noted that there are cases in which mutual aid to the point of sacrifice constitutes a precious support in the life of the partners. Furthermore, the Church pays special attention to the children who live with couples of the same sex emphasizing that the needs and rights of the little ones must always be given priority.”

Can the Catholic Church teach that people should quote unquote “value” homosexual orientation?

Cardinal Burke: No, it’s not possible because we treasure, we value, something that is a good and homosexual relations are not good. They’re not good for anyone. In my own pastoral experience, working with people who suffer with same-sex attraction, it is exactly what the Catechism says: It’s a trial for them. And they need the help of a good priest. They need the help, most of all, of prayer and of frequent access to the sacrament of penance to overcome these attractions which are disordered.

Jeffrey: Do you think that the Catechism’s call for Christians to bear witness to the truth has an application towards how Catholics and the clergy should deal with people who have a homosexual orientation?

Cardinal Burke: Absolutely, and the Catechism is very clear on this. The problem with that text that you read is that it’s all confused. Of course, we have to love the people, the individuals who suffer in this way, and we have to be close to them and try in every way to help them, but what they need from us most of all is that we speak the truth to them. And, so, to give them the impression that we think it’s just fine that they may be acting on these attractions is gravely wrong. And, so, we have to give a witness of love and respect for them as children of God, but at the same time to make very clear to them that any acting on this attraction, which they experience, is mortally sinful, it’s gravely wrong. It’s not for their good and it’s not for the good of anyone else who’s involved.

Jeffrey: And people who are cohabitating out of wedlock and living that lifestyle, or who are living a homosexual lifestyle, should they receive, should they go to communion?

Cardinal Burke: The only way you can receive the sacrament of penance is by confessing your sins with a firm purpose of amendment. And, if you can, say, if you confess the sin of having sexual union outside of marriage, or if you confess the sin of engaging in homosexual acts, and you do not have the firm purpose to change your life to avoid those acts in the future, you can’t receive absolution. And, in the same way, too, then you would not be disposed to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion because your life is a contradiction to the truth that He teaches us.

Jeffrey: By the same notion, if someone were a habitual thief and were routinely stealing the private property of someone else, they would need to not only repent of doing that but stop doing that going forward?

Cardinal Burke: Oh, absolutely. For instance, if someone comes and tells you that they are habitually stealing from people, the priests immediately asks first of all if they make restitution for the things they’ve stolen but also are they firmly resolved not to do this again. If they say, no, no I’m going to continue this, then he can’t give them absolution.

Jeffrey: And God can also forgive a murder?

Cardinal Burke: I’m sorry?

Jeffrey: God would also forgive a murder?

Cardinal Burke: Yes, God will forgive someone who commits this terrible act but only if the person is truly repentant of course.

Jeffrey: Or an abortion? God would forgive an abortion or an abortionist?

Cardinal Burke: Yes, if the person is recognizing the gravity of his sin, is repentant, and vowed never to commit this sin again.

Jeffrey: And if a politician advocates the legal taking of innocent human life in an abortion and the funding of it and the continuation of that, is that a grave sin in the view of the Catholic Church?

Cardinal Burke: Oh, of course. It’s not only grave in itself to advocate for acts against the moral law, but then to do it in a public way and as a leader, a political leader, increases the gravity of the sin.

Jeffrey: When a Catholic politician does that is it scandalous?

Cardinal Burke: Yes, of course.

Jeffrey: But if a Catholic politician repented, turned against the advocacy of abortion, and went back the other way and defended life, then

they could be forgiven and receive communion?

Cardinal Burke: Of course, of course.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, the Ten Commandments say honor thy father and mother which suggests that children have a right to a father and a mother.

Do children have a God given right to a mother and father?

Cardinal Burke: Absolutely, and that is one of the fundamental truths about human life and its cradle in the family that each child has the right to a father and a mother. This was beautifully witnessed in the demonstrations in Paris and in France in general when the state tried to impose the legality of same-sex unions and that there could be adoption of children. In the demonstrations, the logo was a mother and a father with their two children and basically the message was that every child has a right to a father and a mother and even the most secular people seemed to get that, understand that message.

Jeffrey: So, if a government takes a baby and legally hands it over to the custody of a same-sex couple, thus denying that baby either a mother or a father, has that government denied that child his or her God-given right?

Cardinal Burke: Yes, absolutely, and it's demonstrated the profound violence done psychologically to the development of a child who grows up in such a situation which is not natural.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, can the Catholic Church ever say there's something positive about taking a child out of a father-and-mother situation and putting them into a same-sex parent household?

Cardinal Burke: No, no, it's not possible

Jeffrey: The pope cannot say that? The pope cannot say that on behalf of the Catholic Church that this is good?

Cardinal Burke: No, no. No, no, it's not possible.

Jeffrey: Alright. Now, in 1986, Cardinal Ratzinger, who was then the Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and of course later became Benedict XVI, wrote a [pastoral letter on the care of homosexuals](#) that was approved by Pope John Paul II and that letter said: "With this in mind this congregation wishes to ask the bishops to be especially cautious of any programs which may seek to pressure the church to change their teaching on homosexuality even while claiming not to do so. A careful examination of their public statements and the activities they promote reveals a studied ambiguity by which they attempt to mislead the pastors and the faithful." It goes on to say: "Some of these groups will use the word 'Catholic' to describe either the organization or its intended members, yet they do not defend and promote the teaching of the Magisterium; indeed, they even openly attack it."

Do you see this very phenomena that Cardinal Ratzinger warned about in his pastoral letter in 1986 happening today perhaps even in reference to the synod?

Cardinal Burke: I've certainly seen it in so-called Catholic--false Catholic—movements, which have in fact promoted a way of life in contradiction to the church's teaching. And I saw it, too, in some of the very confused language of the, for instance, of the midterm report, and I would say that it exactly would be guilty of the fault which the document on the care of persons suffering from the homosexual condition indicated in 1986.

Jeffrey: In sum, do you believe the bishops and the pope have a duty to avoid confusing Catholics about the church's inalterable teachings on marriage and homosexuality?

Cardinal Burke: Oh, absolutely, even as they have the responsibility to avoid confusing the faithful about anything, especially about such very serious matters, and the duty, too, is even more serious in a culture like our own in which there's such rampant confusion about these matters. To in any way contribute to the confusion about it, is grossly irresponsible and it's a betrayal of the pastoral office.

Jeffrey: Your Eminence, given the confusion that so obviously has been sown in the wake of this synod what do you believe Pope Francis should do now? What should he personally do about it?

Cardinal Burke: Well, I'm not in to giving instructions to the pope, I mean. But what the church needs, I can say that.

What the church desperately needs now is a very clear exposition of her teaching with regard to marriage, divorce, with regard to the grave immorality of sexual union outside of marriage, the grave immorality of any kind of attempt at sexual union between persons of the same sex. And she doesn't have to work hard at this in this sense: that all of the teaching is there. You have quoted it in abundance in this interview. There are many other texts as well. And the church must now in this period hold up the beauty, the splendor, of this teaching for the sake of her own members that they not be confused about the truth but also for the sake of our world and the church's call to serve the world by proclaiming the truth and by giving witness to it.

And, so, I'm praying very fervently that this coming year that this confusion will stop and instead that there will begin to be a strong emphasis on the beauty of the truth of the church's teaching on marriage and on human life and human sexuality.

Jeffrey: Cardinal Raymond Burke, thank you very much.

Cardinal Burke: You're most welcome.

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