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Mouvement international
Nous sommes Eglise
Internationale Bewegung
Wir sind Kirche

International Movement **We are Church**

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Press release

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We are Church: The Roman Catholic Church should accept the role of condoms in the prevention of HIV/Aids. The Need for Future-orientated Christian Sexual Ethics

Statement on the occasion of the 20th World AIDS Day, December 1, 2008

The 'International Movement We are Church' asks leaders and theologians of the Roman Catholic Church **to reassess its moral teachings concerning the use of condoms** in the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

On the occasion of the 20th World AIDS Day 'We Are Church' insists that the spread of HIV/AIDS, one of the world's deadliest diseases cannot be overcome without the use of condoms. The **mere appeal of the Church to abstinence** does not do justice to the reality of human life and **is deeply irresponsible**.

Caring for those who are already infected and suffering from HIV/AIDS is an outstanding example of Christian charity. Charitable work by so many Christian men and women around the world is absolutely essential in preventing the stigma and exclusion of HIV/AIDS victims and their families. Their illness is often borne in conditions of material, social, and spiritual poverty. **But this charitable work alone will not stop the spread of HIV/AIDS.** The use of condoms in this situation is basically a choice for life and not for death.

'We are Church' asks all Bishops and members of the Church to acknowledge the devotional work of so many priests, social and pastoral workers involved in HIV/AIDS projects. They deserve great respect and every possible support whether or not condoms are part of the help they provide.

'We are Church' is very concerned with the pressure some Bishops put on these Catholic men and women. **To prohibit the use of condoms in the prevention of the transmission of HIV/AIDS is a great sin of our Church**, the Catholic reform movement 'We are Church' maintains.

In his latest book Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini calls for a new vision of 'Humanae Vitae' (1968) in the light of views expressed by German, Austrian, and Canadian bishops amongst others. Forty years of lived experience calls for change.

The Need for Future-orientated Christian Sexual Ethics

Future-orientated Christian sexual ethics, suited to meet natural human requirements, should aim to analyse and to **take into account social developments without seeking to condemn them**. The Christian good news – loving our neighbour as ourselves – is the main frame for our orientation.

New scientific findings regarding human sexuality have to be allowed for. Orientation to a static natural law alone is inadequate. The varying situation of today of women, men and families - influenced by social, political, scientific and global developments - has to be taken into account. New principles have to be worked out and decided equally by women and men reflecting on their life experience.

The Roman-Catholic Church really needs a **new philanthropic, loving understanding of sexuality which is free from anxiety**. Human sexuality, created and affirmed by God, is a life giving energy. When we observe sexuality in all its complexity we should not reduce it to its reproductive and social functions alone. Its particular value consists in the relationship of equal partners.

Youth and young adults have to be viewed sensitively with care and wisdom during the development of their sexuality. Topics such as sexual relations, contraception, or sexual orientation ought to be addressed frankly according to the values of Christian ethics. This will promote the formation of conscience.

Mutual respect and the responsibility for life are the main **guidelines of any partnership**. A blanket condemnation of existing non-marital and pre-marital sexual relations does not do justice to the women and men involved and to their behaviour.

Married partners are living out exceptional lives of mutual love, responsibility and fidelity. The Second Vatican Council (1962 to 1965) expects married people to equally respect their own well-being and that of their born or expected children; they are obliged to identify the material and spiritual conditions of their time and their lives – and finally take care of the well-being of the whole family, the secular world and the church (Second Vatican Council, pastoral constitution "gaudium et spes", article 50).

The protection of the social life of men and women as well as the passing on of life has been laid down in all religions. **Effective principles of a humane sexual ethic for our planet can only be developed in a process which includes all religions (and confessions) and which shows respect for social realities.**

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