

Statement of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York and the Bruderhof Communities September 22, 2014

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York and the Bruderhof communities believe that God has intervened in human history – decisively – in the birth of his only son Jesus Christ, in his life, teaching, crucifixion, and resurrection. Jesus teaches that “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” ([John 14:6](#)). It is the person of Jesus Christ, Son of God, who has revealed to us the fullness of God’s truth and love.

God created every one of us to exist for him and for others. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,” and “you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these” ([Mark 12:30–31](#)). We are born to love purely. Purity between people – between man and woman in marriage, and between all persons in the single life – is God’s will and brings joy. Purity requires faithfulness and readiness for self-sacrifice: “If anyone would be my follower, he must deny his very self, take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” ([Luke 9:23–24](#)).

Concerning marriage, Pope John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women: “Man and woman are called from the beginning not only to exist ‘side by side’ or ‘together,’ but they are also called to exist mutually ‘one for the other’... On the basis of the principle of mutuality being ‘for’ the other in interpersonal ‘communion,’ there develops in humanity itself, in accordance with God’s will, the integration of what is ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’” (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 7).

In the same spirit, the Bruderhof communities’ *Foundations of Our Faith and Calling* states: “Christ declared marriage to be the lifelong union of one man and one woman joined together by God, holy and instituted by him from the beginning: ‘From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate’ ([Mark 10:6–9](#))...As a creation of God, marriage is not a human invention. It is a sacrament that precedes and transcends the authority of the state. When a man and a woman become one flesh in marriage, their union has a deep connection with God. He made man and woman for each other, each in his image and likeness, and yet each incomplete without the other. He intended their union – a relationship unlike any other – for the bearing and rearing of children” (*Foundations*, nos. 77–78).

We believe that human sexuality is a marvelous gift from God, given to all but intended to be expressed in the sexual act only in the marriage of a man and a woman, and otherwise in chaste friendship. It is clear, however, that over the last half-century human sexuality and purity have been undermined greatly in our culture. Human sin will always lead us to fall short of embracing God’s plan completely. But in western culture especially, lust is being given freer reign. Lust is too often stimulated and exploited for material profit in much of the mass media. Sins of adultery, pornography, premarital sexual intercourse, masturbation, contraception, homosexual practice, and divorce and remarriage have

become increasingly accepted, even by those who say they are faithful to Jesus Christ. These practices are openly championed and are often protected by civil law. One result of this is a weakening of faithfulness in marriage and a loss of the sense of the sacredness of the marriage covenant.

The vision of life communicated to us through Jesus Christ gives us the confidence and power to confront these problems. The gospel is Good News! We proclaim the gospel of life, the good news of life: “I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly” ([John 10:10](#)).

Jesus knows our temptations and gives us direction, strength, and grace to overcome them. In Christian marriage, the unity of husband and wife reflects the unity of Christ and his Church. Their mutual marriage vows are made in the presence of Christ and his Church. In keeping with [Philippians 4:8](#), marriage is sacred, noble, right, and indissoluble. Marriage has the blessing of God and the Church, and that blessing is experienced by the married couple as mutual service, purity, beauty, loveliness, and joy. Marriage is admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy as well as unitive and procreative. The two become one flesh in the sight of God, and in becoming one flesh, a couple experiences God’s great love in their love to each other. Marriage is sacred, and it is indissoluble. Marriage has the blessing of God and the Church and that blessing is experienced by the married couple as mutual service, purity, beauty, and joy. Marriage is both unitive and procreative. The two become one flesh in the sight of God. With profound reverence, husband and wife know that in this act of supreme love and self-giving they open themselves to becoming co-creators with God to bring new life into the world. Each child born to them is a blessed gift as well as a new responsibility. Through the love of their father and mother, children get their first sense of the love of God.

Any form of sexual self-gratification is an affront to the purity of marriage, and with God’s help must be overcome. Sexual impurity infects and weakens the marriage relationship whenever one of the couple or both use the other as a sex object. Paul gives a clear guide for the Christian and married life: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” ([Galatians 5:22–23](#)).

A very special gift is given to every man or woman who is called to a life of celibacy in the service of God and his or her fellow human beings. When circumstances, rather than choice, lead to a single life, there is a special challenge to witness to purity and service. Men and women in that position need both the grace of God and the understanding and support of all Christians.

Out of love for Christ and for all people, it is imperative that leaders of the Christian community encourage believing Christians to stand and affirm the virtue of purity. It is in this spirit that the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York and the Bruderhof communities are working together. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we embrace each other with respect and shared love and a common concern for a society that has been darkened by the consequences of sin. Despite the fact that certain doctrinal differences exist, our two faith communities stand together in the name of the gospel to make a joint plea to all people of good will to embrace the power of purity, decency, and virtuous living in their sexuality.

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, purity, modesty, and God's grace are integral to the Christian life. In a section entitled "The Battle for Purity," the Church declares: "Purity requires modesty, an integral part of temperance...Modesty protects the mystery of persons and their love. It encourages patience and moderation in loving relationships; it requires that the conditions for the definitive giving and commitment of man and woman to one another be fulfilled...Christian purity requires a purification of the social climate. It requires of the communications media that their presentations show concern for respect and restraint....So-called moral permissiveness rests on an erroneous conception of human freedom; the necessary precondition for the development of true freedom is to let oneself be educated in the moral law...The Good News of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen man; it combats and removes error and evil, which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. It takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation, and with supernatural riches it causes them to blossom, as it were from within; it fortifies, completes, and restores them in Christ" (CCC, nos. 2520–2527).

In his book *Sex, God, and Marriage*, Bruderhof senior pastor Johann Christoph Arnold calls upon all people to embrace a pure life. "Too many people today have simply given up on the possibility of a pure life. They have bought into the myth of sexual 'liberation' and tried to live with its disappointments, and when their relationships fall apart, they explain away their failures. They fail to see what a tremendous gift purity is... Wherever there is a faithful church – a community of people who are committed to living in genuine and honest relationships – there is help and hope for every person and every marriage" (*Sex, God, and Marriage*, fourth edition, page xvi–xvii).

Our common calling to follow Christ and our shared desire to encourage people of goodwill to live a life of purity bring together our two communities of faith. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York and the Bruderhof communities exhort all people – especially those baptized in the name of Christ – to live a chaste life. Seeking the power of God's grace, both communities plead for purity. There is no greater need in our culture today, and for every human heart, than to know God's love and to embrace it in living our fundamental call to holiness of life. This is especially true for our children, who need our example so they may learn to embrace the way of Jesus Christ as their only path to happiness and fulfillment in life.

It is our hope and prayer that people everywhere will open their hearts to the transforming power of true love. And we recognize that if we lack courage to confront and inspire our members with Christ's truth, our efforts on account of morality will have but little effect. A pure mind, body, and soul are essential to a life of happiness and peace. Despite the obstacles placed by weakening moral standards, building a culture of life and love, according to God's plan, is possible. Let us never forget that God wills the best for each human being, and that for him, "all things are possible" ([Matt. 19:26](#)). Amen.

Timothy Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York

Johann Christoph Arnold
Senior Pastor, Bruderhof