

Pope Francis pushes new boundaries and expresses support for same-sex civil unions

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Pope Francis says "homosexual people have a right to be in a family". (Reuters: Remo Casilli)

Pope Francis has broken with tradition in a new documentary released this week by expressing support for same-sex civil unions, in some of the clearest language he has used in relation to the rights of LGBTQ people.

Key points:

- While still an archbishop Pope Francis previously expressed support for civil unions rather than gay marriage
- Soon after becoming Pope, he said it was not his place to judge gay people
- Pope Francis made the most recent comments in a new documentary, *Francesco*, released this week

"Homosexual people have a right to be in a family," he says in the documentary, *Francesco*, by Oscar-nominated director Evgeny Afineevsky.

"They are children of God and have a right to a family. Nobody should be thrown out or be made miserable over it.

"What we have to create is a civil union law. That way they are legally covered. I stood up for that," he said.

When he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Pope Francis opposed legislation to approve same sex marriage but supported legal protections for the rights of gay couples.

Papal biographer Austen Ivereigh told Reuters that the Pope's comments in the film were some of the clearest language the pontiff has used on the subject since his election in 2013.

Attitude has 'massively changed'

The Pope, [who early in his papacy made the now-famous "Who am I to judge?" remark about homosexuals trying to live a Christian life](#), spoke in a section of the film about Andrea Rubera, a gay man who with his partner adopted three children.

Mr Rubera says in the film that he went to a morning Mass at the Pope's Vatican residence and gave him a letter explaining his situation.

He told the Pope that he and his partner wanted to bring the children up as Catholics in the local parish but did not want to cause any trauma for the children.

Mr Rubera says the Pope telephoned him several days later, telling him he thought the letter was "beautiful" and urging the couple to introduce their children to the parish but to be ready for opposition.

"His message and his advice was really useful because we did exactly what he told us. It's the third year that they [the children] are on a spiritual path in the parish," Mr Rubera says in the film.

"He didn't mention what was his opinion about my family so [I think] he is following the doctrine on this point but the attitude towards people has massively changed," he says.

The Catholic Church teaches that homosexual tendencies are not sinful but homosexual acts are. It teaches that homosexuals should be treated with dignity.

In 2013, Pope Francis said it was not his place to judge homosexuals and they should not be marginalised, but he also condemned the gay lobby as a "serious problem".

The remarks — made to journalists as he flew back to Rome from a trip to Brazil — appeared to be more conciliatory towards homosexuals than his predecessor Benedict XVI.

"If someone is gay and seeks the Lord with good will, who am I to judge?" he said.

"The problem is not having this orientation, it is lobbying. That's the most serious problem I think."

Reuters