

# **Church opposes considering homosexuality a crime, spokesman says**

VATICAN CITY - A Vatican spokesman said the Catholic Church is clearly against considering homosexuality a crime, but is wary of international declarations that use the issue to promote a political agenda based on sexual orientation.

The spokesman, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, made the comment Dec. 11 in response to questions at a Vatican press conference.

In early December, a leading Vatican diplomat drew criticism from gay-rights groups when he said the Vatican opposed a proposed U.N. declaration to endorse the universal decriminalization of homosexuality.

The diplomat, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's apostolic nuncio to the United Nations, said such a declaration might be used to put pressure on or discriminate against countries that do not recognize same-sex marriage.

Father Lombardi, in his latest comments to reporters, said the Vatican was not conducting a battle against the United Nations or weakening its opposition to discrimination against homosexuals, which is clearly stated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

"There is no question that the church is contrary to legislation that criminalizes homosexuality," Father Lombardi said.

The church's position stems from its respect for the rights and dignity of every person, and explicitly excludes "any unjust discrimination on the basis of homosexuality," Father Lombardi said.

The spokesman noted that Archbishop Migliore's comments were made in response to a question about a draft declaration that had yet to be presented at the United Nations or in any public forum.

He said Archbishop Migliore's point was that it's one thing to argue against discrimination and criminalization regarding homosexuality, but another to contend that anyone who makes a distinction based on sexual orientation is considered an adversary of human rights.

Specifically, Archbishop Migliore expressed the fear that the draft declaration could lead to a situation in which "states that do not recognize same-sex unions as 'marriage' will be pilloried and put under pressure" to do so.