

Homosexuals deserve respect, compassion, says Vatican spokesman

VATICAN CITY - In response to a report that a Mexican cardinal stated homosexuals will be banished from heaven, the Vatican spokesman said people should treat those who have homosexual tendencies with respect and compassion.

Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, the retired president of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry, said "trans(sexuals) and homosexuals will never get to the kingdom of heaven and it's not me saying it, but St. Paul," according to the Italian online news site, Pontifex.

In an interview published by the site Dec. 2, Cardinal Lozano said people with homosexual tendencies are not born that way, but become so "for various reasons, because of education or because they haven't developed their own identity in adolescence."

"Maybe it's not their fault, but by acting against the dignity of the body, they certainly will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Everything that involves going against nature and against the dignity of the body offends God," the cardinal is reported to have said.

In a Dec. 2 e-mail response to reporters' requests for a reaction, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, said, "First of all I would like to point out that the site, pontifex.roma.it, lacks authority and is not a good source for understanding with objectivity the church's thoughts on complex and delicate issues like evaluating homosexuality."

"It would be better, for example, to refer to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which does talk about homosexual acts as 'disordered,' but takes into account the fact that 'the number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible,'" Father Lombardi wrote.

Homosexuals “must be welcomed with respect and sensitivity, and ‘every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided,’” he wrote, quoting the catechism.