

Pope, in book, says homosexuality incompatible with priesthood

VATICAN CITY – In his new book, Pope Benedict XVI strongly reaffirmed church teaching that homosexual acts are “disordered” and said homosexuality itself is “incompatible” with the priesthood.

The pope’s comments came in his new book-interview, “Light of the World: The Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times,” which was published Nov. 23.

The interviewer, German journalist Peter Seewald, asked the pope whether the church’s teaching that homosexuals deserve respect isn’t contradicted by its position that homosexual acts are “intrinsically disordered.”

The pope answered: “No. It is one thing to say that they are human beings with their problems and their joys, that as human beings they deserve respect, even though they have this inclination, and must not be discriminated against because of it.”

“At the same time, though, sexuality has an intrinsic meaning and direction, which is not homosexual,” he said. “The meaning and direction of sexuality is to bring about the union of man and woman and, in this way, to give humanity posterity, children, a future.”

The pope said the church needs to hold firm on this point, “even if it is not pleasing to our age.”

He said it was still an open question whether homosexual inclinations are innate or arise early in life. In any case, he said, if these are strong inclinations, it represents “a great trial” for the homosexual.

“But this does not mean that homosexuality thereby becomes morally right. Rather, it remains contrary to the essence of what God originally willed,” he said.

When Seewald said that homosexuality exists in monasteries and among the clergy, even if not acted out, the pope responded: “Well, that is just one of the miseries of

the church. And the persons who are affected must at least try not to express this inclination actively.”

“Homosexuality is incompatible with the priestly vocation. Otherwise, celibacy itself would lose its meaning as a renunciation. It would be extremely dangerous if celibacy became a sort of pretext for bringing people into the priesthood who don’t want to get married anyway,” the pope said.

The pope cited a 2005 Vatican document that drew a sharp line against priestly ordination of homosexuals. He said the document emphasized that homosexual candidates cannot become priests because their sexual orientation interferes with “the proper sense of paternity” that belongs to the priesthood.

The pope said it was important to select priestly candidates very carefully, “to head off a situation where the celibacy of priests would practically end up being identified with the tendency to homosexuality.”