

Vatican says 2005 document on gays applies to all seminaries

VATICAN CITY - In a clarification approved by Pope Benedict XVI, the Vatican said its 2005 document prohibiting the admission of homosexuals to the priesthood applies to all types of seminaries.

That includes houses of formation run by religious orders and those under the authority of the agencies dealing with missionary territories and Eastern churches, said a statement signed by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state.

The two-sentence clarification was published May 17 by the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano. It came in response to "numerous requests for clarification," the Vatican said.

In 2005, after more than eight years of study, the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education issued "Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations With Regard to Persons With Homosexual Tendencies in View of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders."

The nine-page instruction said the church cannot allow the priestly ordination of men who are active homosexuals, who have "deep-seated" homosexual tendencies or who support the "gay culture." It urged bishops, major superiors and "all relevant authorities" to make sure the norms were followed.

Cardinal Bertone's clarification said in response to questions, "It is specified that the provisions contained in this instruction are valid for all the houses of priestly formation, including those that depend on the Congregation for Eastern Churches, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life."

It said the pope had approved the clarification April 8.