



POSITION PAPER

AFFECTION AND SEXUALITY IN CNE PROGRAMME

Recognising the various dimensions that make up the human condition, the Entre Linhas [in between the lines] project addressed Christian reflection on affection and sexuality in the programme of the Portuguese catholic Scouts – Corpo Nacional de Escutas [CNE]. The National Board, deeply aware of our dual membership of the Scout movement and the catholic Church, adopted the following principles to guide CNE in tackling this question. Based on these principles and guidelines, while remaining open to further developments and improvements, CNE has tried to serve the children and young people in its charge with sensitivity and creativity to the best of its abilities, faithful to its identity and mission and with the indispensable support of its adult volunteers.

Affection and sexuality in CNE programme

1. As a non-formal educational movement for children and young people based on the scout method devised by Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, in light of the Gospel and to carry out its mission, CNE:

- a. is a member of a **sinodal church** that listens to all and desires to walk with all;
- b. is a member of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement and strives to make a contribution through its unity and development of its identity and mission;
- c. believes in God's unconditional love for each of His children in the truth and individuality of everyone's **existential condition** (acc.cf Isa 43:1-4), including their **sexual orientation**;
- d. strives to help children and young people develop their **personal life plan**, meeting Jesus Christ, to become citizens who play a constructive role in society and are committed to changing the world constantly;
- e. is aware of the real challenges facing all leaders in their units in a constantly-changing socio-cultural context;

Synodal Church

Synodality is the path which God expects of the Church of the third millennium. (Address from Pope Francis at the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops). Synodality means walking together along the same path. It is an opportunity for encounter, dialogue and assembly to achieve agreement on decisions that have to be taken. The concept of synod comes from syn (with) and odos (path). Without it there is no communion. Synodality is the visible aspect of communion. In the Church, synodality is not a mere methodology but rather a way of being and acting. A Synodal Church is a Church in which all the baptised walk together, trying to discern the best way of proclaiming and testifying the Kingdom of God together. In CNE, the Catholic Church's Scout association, the programme is also the outcome of a synodal path.

Existential Condition

By "existential condition" we mean what an individual really is, knows and feels to be in the depths of its own conscience, understood as "the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths." (acc. Gaudium et spes, 16).

Sexual Orientation

We understand this as the part of personal identity that includes someone's emotional and/or sexual attraction with regard to another and the behaviour and/or the social expression resulting from this attraction. It corresponds to an emotional preference, with or without sexual expression by people of the same sex, of a different sex or both sexes.

Personal Life-Plan (PLP)

In the CNE programme, the PLP is a tool used to build a path to happiness, towards the ideal of the New Man – developed particularly in CNE's 18-22 years old section – in this context, a personal life plan depends on understanding existence as a reply to a call that requires free choice.

In this context, affection and sexuality both need to form part of a life plan and should not be experienced superficially in a search for purely selfish happiness.

A personal life plan incorporates affection and sexuality as constituent parts that are essential to a happy, meaningful life.

- f.** understands that humans are sexual beings and that experiencing affection and sexuality is a fundamental personal dimension that encompasses the whole of existence;
- g.** considers that human sexuality should be considered from the standpoint of every dimension of the human condition;
- h.** recognises how **affection** and **sexuality** contribute to a happy life and is fully aware of the existence of pain, suffering and exclusion situations;
- i.** understands that affection and sexuality develop closely and seamlessly in each of the human dimensions covered in CNE's programme (physical, emotional, character, spiritual, intellectual and social) in order to contribute to the full realisation of happiness to which each person is called and seeks;
- j.** recognises that the sexual expression of love is also desired by God in the context of genuine human love;
- k.** believes in the richness of the **sacrament of marriage**, based on a relationship between man and woman, as an occasion open to life, recognising, however, that the **Christian experience of love** is not unique to this type of union;
- l.** does not support educational methods and ideologies that promote a **personal identity** and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female or based purely on the choice of the individual (acc. *Amoris laetitia* 56);

Affection

Is the individual's capacity to experience and give meaning to a range of emotions and feelings, comprising the influence these expressions exercise on each individual.

As humans equally affected by biological and cultural influences, affection develops initially from an unconscious impulse (emotion), followed by realisation (feeling) and finally in the way it becomes integrated in the individual's story (giving meaning to it).

Sexuality

"In common use, it may refer to a person's interrelated systems of chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, external genitalia and secondary sex characteristics".

In our context, it is also an example of a bio-psychological dynamism resulting from affection experienced in interpersonal relations that form an integral part of the dimensions making up the human being. A life that does not include sexuality cannot be fully human.

The sacrament of marriage

"By which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life" so that "they are no longer two, therefore, but one flesh" (acc. Matt 19:6), thus forming a community of life and love. It is achieved through conjugal union which they give to and receive from each other, with the free, irrevocable consent of both parties.

Its purpose is the good of the couple and the generation and good of children. It is also a demonstration of Christ's love for the Church. (acc. Catechism of the Catholic Church and the rite of Marriage)

The Christian experience of love

This is the core of a believer's life. It is experienced by identifying the way in which Christ, loving His neighbour, in giving His life demonstrated ultimate love.

In a couple's relationship it is the fulfilment of a life plan, based on community, commitment and truth, being productive and building the common good.

Personal identity

This combines an individual's distinctive characteristics that are closely linked to genetic inheritance, their individuality and relationship history. It is a changing, living process that develops throughout people's existence, being nourished by life's experiences and therefore incorporating different perspectives such as religious and political beliefs, gender identity, aesthetics and social behaviour.

Personal identity is the reply given to the questions "Who am I?" and "Who am I for?"

m. maintains that biological **sex** and the socio-cultural role of sex (**gender**) are distinguishable but inseparable in building identity (acc. Amoris laetitia 56).

Sex

Is a biological category determined by the anatomical and physiological characteristics distinguishing male and female. It is defined by a unique combination of chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs and external genitalia. The word 'sex' only refers to someone's biological inheritance as a man or a woman. Human life is biologically binary by its nature, in the same way that no two males or females experience or express their biological sex in exactly the same way.

Intersexualidade

"Strictly speaking, 'intersex' refers to persons born with indeterminate biological sex characteristics (i.e. chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, external genitalia and/or secondary sexual characteristics) such that it is difficult or impossible to know, on sight, whether an individual is biologically male or female. Often a genetic test is required. There are several recognised medical conditions that qualify as 'intersex'.

In our Christian vision we are careful to note that intersex conditions are medical in nature, not psychological." (acc. Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Created and Loved: A guide for Catholic schools on identity and gender))

Gender

This is the socio-cultural category resulting from a social process derived from the difference between men and women. This includes roles and expectations society expects with regard to behaviour, thought and characteristics resulting from someone's biological sex. In this context, expectations about how men and women should behave contribute to building a conception of gender and this can vary according to local cultures.

Even when used to refer to the psychological meaning of the personal self, as distinct from someone's biological sex, gender is, therefore, based on, or refers to, biological sex. In fact, not everyone of the same sex experiences their gender or lives in the same way. Despite there being multiple ways of being 'masculine' or 'feminine', each is based on the individual's biological heritage.

Gender incongruence

"In common use, this refers to a felt difference between one's sex and one's gender causing a feeling of discomfort or 'mismatch'. When this discomfort causes distress such that it prevents one from functioning well, the term 'gender dysphoria' is often used." (acc. Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Created and Loved: A guide for Catholic schools on identity and gender))

2. CNE will apply the following principles:

- a.** CNE accepts children and young people in their individual path as they stand, supporting them in developing all aspects of their identity, including sexual orientation;
- b.** CNE offers children and young people, as protagonists of their overall development, an educational path, in which experiencing affection and sexuality is fully and harmoniously present, helping them to grow into an active adulthood, able to exercise critical judgement, able to get involved in society, enlightened by their Christian faith and prepared to face up to and respond to daily problems;
- c.** CNE stresses that respect for personal liberty and the involvement of families lie at the heart of bringing up their sons and daughters in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- d.** CNE considers that personal experience of sexuality needs to be directed towards building **happiness**, based on **commitment** and being productive, leading to a life in which gifts, talents and qualities are put to the service of the **common good**, even where there can be no biological procreation;
- e.** CNE encourages its members to be aware of painful situations experienced by people of different sexual orientations, as they develop their personal identity;
- f.** CNE rejects aggressive behaviour or unfair discrimination in interpersonal, emotional or sexual relations whether in CNE or in family and social contexts, reaffirming that everyone, regardless of their sexual orientation, has to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, (acc. Amoris laetitia, 250);
- g.** CNE requires all adults in a leadership role - educator and evangeliser - to act with human and Christian maturity, using the gifts, talents and qualities they possess so that they are able to identify the challenges faced in experiencing affection and sexuality today, respecting the reality of everyone's existential condition including their sexual orientation;
- h.** CNE recognises that the existential condition of adult leaders in CNE, and the experience of their own sexuality, need to be considered in the light of **truth in relationships** that have, in turn, to be based on **commitment**, being productive and achieving the **common good**;

Happiness

The dreams and ideals someone experiences and which imply a search for true happiness in life. It involves setting more or less well-defined goals, whose pursuance involves experiences that intensify love for one's self and others, thus leading to the happiness to which God calls us. This path will, of necessity, involve the hurdles, adversities and frailties inherent in human life and all processes of growth and maturing. It also implies profound respect in emotional relationships, the limits that they imply (recognition of self – recognition of others as other) and placing everyone's gifts and talents at the service of the community in order to build a fruitful life.

Commitment

A reciprocal bond based on equality of rights and duties, stability, respect, fidelity, cooperation and support. In the context of emotional relationships, it implies a combination of behaviours and attitudes which the person undertakes voluntarily. (acc. Portuguese Civil Code, art 1671 et seq.) (acc. Catechism of the Catholic Church, second part, art 7, 1601 et seq.)

Common good

The greatest possible good for individuals and everyone. It is "the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment", (acc. Gaudium et spes, 26)

In these guidelines, common good means that building identity must always be open to the community and the individual.

Truth in relationships

A relationship experienced in truth requires an emotional link between two people, based on a true, consistent experience of love requiring sincerity, respect, faithfulness and genuineness, in personal identity and in daily life and in experiencing encounter with Jesus Christ. These qualities, when present, translate into feelings, choices and behaviour of commitment to the other person and being productive in building the common good.

Commitment

A reciprocal bond based on equality of rights and duties, stability, respect, fidelity, cooperation and support. In the context of emotional relationships, it implies a combination of behaviours and attitudes which the person undertakes voluntarily. (acc. Portuguese Civil Code, art 1671 et seq.) (acc. Catechism of the Catholic Church, second part, art 7, 1601 et seq.)

i. CNE develops awareness, equips and trains its leaders to welcome and develop children and young people on the basis of everyone's existential condition;

j. CNE takes an active part in discussing and promoting attitudes in the Church that foster the creation of an atmosphere of welcome and inclusion in the light of the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and actively promote **ecclesial communion**.

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Ecclesial Communion

"The Church's deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable." (Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 25), and should be experienced in ecclesial communion. Ecclesial communion – the communion of all the baptised called by the risen Christ – expresses the being and action of the Church, as also demonstrated through this dialogue.