

STATEMENT ON INCLUSION AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

Among the six Benedictine values of the University of Mary is hospitality. In Chapter 53 of the Rule of Saint Benedict, we read these words: “All guests who present themselves are to be received as Christ, for he is going to say, ‘I was a stranger, and you welcomed me.’ (cf. Matthew 25:35)”

As a Christian, Catholic, Benedictine university, we strive to welcome, respect, appreciate, and love all persons, recognizing the fundamental dignity of each person as created in the image and likeness of God. It is part of our mission to model and foster Christian, Catholic, and Benedictine conduct and virtue within our community.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that persons who experience same-sex attraction or identify as LGBT “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.” (¶ 2358) The University of Mary therefore condemns any and all direct or indirect intimidation or harassment of any person in regard to their sexuality. Such behavior is offensive, detestable, and an affront to human dignity. Catholic moral teaching also holds that all persons, whatever their experience of sexuality, are called to lives of chastity in accord with their vocation and their state of life. Neglect or failure to do so is likewise harmful to human dignity.

Because the Church has clearly and consistently taught that the only morally acceptable sexual activity is between a woman and a man within the context of marriage, some may wonder if those who experience same-sex attraction are somehow less deserving of love and respect. They are not.

The University of Mary upholds this twofold teaching with clarity and compassion. However, clarity is not to be confused with or result in actions that exclude, demean, or renounce anyone. Nor is compassion to be confused with or result in actions that endorse or excuse morally wrong behavior or activities.

We recognize that our approach may be in conflict with the practice or vision of the larger culture, as Christian beliefs have been in other times and places. We assert as fundamental to our mission the right to uphold Catholic teaching and administer according to it. We recognize that within our community there are individuals who identify as LGBT, and they are deeply valued. We grieve for any in the history of Mary College or the University of Mary who have been treated hurtfully. And because every one of our lives hold experiences of isolation, brokenness, and seeking, we renew our resolve to foster a healthy and life-giving experience of community for students, faculty, and staff, rooted in loving concern for one another.

Finally, as a university, we encourage the vigorous pursuit of truth and the free exchange of ideas; we further encourage members of our community to engage this issue with civility and mutual respect.

Approved

13 August 2015 by the Board of Trustees (EC)