APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

3339 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008-3610

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Prot. N. 12384/20

Your Excellency,

The Secretariat of State of the Holy Father has asked me to share with you, and through you with the members of the Episcopal Conference, the following observations in reference to certain remarks contained in the documentary film "Francesco", by director Evgeny Afineevesky, that have caused various reactions and interpretations in the last few days. The Holy Father has directed that these observations be offered in order to permit an adequate understanding of his words.

More than a year ago, in the course of an interview, Pope Francis responded to two distinct questions at different moments that, in the said documentary, were edited and published as a single response without the necessary context, which has resulted in confusion. The Holy Father, first and foremost, referred in a pastoral manner to the need, within the family, for a son or daughter with a homosexual orientation to never be discriminated against. The following words are intended in this sense: "Las personas homosexuales tienen derecho a estar en familia; son hijos de Dios, tienen derecho a una familia. No se puede echar de la familia a nadie ni hacerle la vida imposible por eso".

The following paragraph from the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation concerning love in the family, *Amoris laetitia* (2016), can shed light on those responses: "During the Synod, we discussed the situation of families whose members include persons who experience same-sex attraction, a situation not easy either for parents or for children. We would like before all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated

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with consideration, while 'every sign of unjust discrimination' is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence. Such families should be given respectful pastoral guidance, so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives."

A subsequent question during that interview pertained rather to a local law of ten years ago in Argentina, regarding "*matrimonios igualitarios de parejas del mismo sexo*" and to the opposition of the then Archbishop of Buenos Aires towards it. In this respect, Pope Francis affirmed that "*es una incongruencia hablar de matrimonio homosexual*", adding that, in such a precise context, he had spoken of the right of these persons to legal cover: "*lo que tenemos que hacer es una ley de convivencia civil: tienen derecho a estar cubiertos legalmente. Yo defendí eso.*"

During a 2014 interview, the Holy Father expressed himself as follows: "Marriage is between a man and a woman. Secular States want to justify civil unions in order to regularize the various situations of cohabitation, driven by the necessity to regularize economic matters between persons, such as ensuring health care, for example. This relates to various forms of cohabitation agreement, which I would not be able to list. The different situations must be examined and evaluated, according to their circumstances."

It is therefore clear that Pope Francis was referring to particular State provisions, and not certainly to the doctrine of the Church, which has been reiterated on numerous occasions over the years.

Grateful for your cooperation in this matter, I assure you of my good wishes and remain

Yours faithfully,

+ Christophe Pierre

✠ Christophe Pierre
Apostolic Nuncio