

## Is the Pope Devolving?

In a private meeting with Juan Carlos Cruz, Chilean survivor of clerical sex abuse, Pope Francis reportedly told the 'gay-identified' Cruz that 'God made him gay' and 'that you have to be happy with who you are.'

Huh. Always a chance the Pope was misquoted. If not, I submit the following.

Pope Francis may have changed his views on what he terms 'gender ideology;' something he renounced in his last two encyclicals. 'Gender ideology' holds to a distinctly non-Christian understanding of humanity; it demands that we accept any number of gender configurations on the grounds that they are inborn, unchangeable, and normal – morally neutral. Telling another that 'God made him gay' is a pastoral application of 'gender ideology,' not a challenge of it. The good Pope didn't think it through.

Pope Francis fails to grasp that sexual abuse actually damages a child's sexual development. Recent studies show a strong corollary between adults who 'gay-identify' and their experience of sexual violation as kids. Instead of attributing Cruz's sexual identity to God, Pope Francis should ask him pardon for contributing to his same-sex attraction through a priest's perverse invasion of his childhood.

Maybe the Pope makes the mistake of compensating for the damage done by giving Cruz a pass. Letting go of reason, he assuages Cruz's violation with a platitude like 'you have to be happy with who you are.'

Jesus took a different approach with the woman caught in adultery. Fierce, and with wise compassion, Jesus first defended her from a system designed to scourge her, not unlike blame shifting mucky mucks in the Catholic hierarchy who Francis rightly exposed and disciplined. But Jesus, after every Pharisee dropped his stone, exhorted the woman 'to leave her life of sin' (John 8:11). He didn't encourage her 'to be happy' with her adulterous tendencies in the hope that she might be further fractured by immorality.

Pope Francis gives a platitude to one who needs inspired, fatherly guidance. His kindness masks the cruelty of an ideology that confirms God's children in a lie. I applaud him for stepping up efforts to cleanse the Church of abuse; if this reported exchange is true, I correct him for springing one trap only to set another for the most vulnerable.