

Vatican: transsexuals can be baptised

12 November 2023

Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith, 3 november 2023

The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith has confirmed, at the request of a Brazilian bishop, that transgender people or people born through surrogacy can be baptised, provided no scandal or confusion is caused as a result. The document signed by Pope Francis on 31 October 2023 also confirms that homosexuals or transgender people can witness marriage or a baptism (godfather or godmother). It specifies that transgender believers “may receive baptism, under the same conditions as other believers, if there is no situation where there is a risk of public scandal or uncertainty among the faithful”. The same advice applies to someone who has undergone hormone treatment and/or gender reassignment surgery.

The dicastery, which since September has been headed by Argentine Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernandez, was thus responding to questions by Brazilian Bishop José Negri of Santo Amaro, dated 14 July. In it, he asked for clarification on the possible participation in the sacraments of baptism and marriage by transgender people and people with homosexual preferences. On 8 November, the Vatican discreetly published a reply on its website, also pointing out that the dicastery had previously expressed its views on this and that this position is now confirmed. Yet it is the first time the Vatican has clarified so explicitly that a transsexual, “even if he has undergone hormonal treatment and gender reassignment surgery”, can receive baptism.

It is also accompanied by a long argument of a theological and philosophical nature. In it, St Thomas Aquinas, among others, is quoted as a reminder that baptism, even if it lacks the “right disposition”, is, by its sacramental nature, “an immediate cause that leads a person to receive grace”.