

Cardinal Tagle criticises use of ‘harsh words’ for gay and divorced people



Cardinal from Manila was in Britain for the Flame 2 Youth Congress at Wembley

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, Archbishop of Manila, has lamented the “harsh words” that the Church used about gay and divorced people in the past, saying it left them feeling “branded”.

The cardinal, who had spoken at the Flame 2 Youth Congress, a gathering of 8,000 young Catholics at the SSE Wembley Arena, told the Telegraph that a “growth in mercy” and a shift in sensibilities meant that “what constituted in the past an acceptable way of showing mercy, ... now, given our contemporary mindset, may not be any more viewed as that”.

He said that insights in child psychology had led to a change in the way people were instructed about Church teaching in Catholic schools and other institutions.

He said: “I think even the language has changed already, the harsh words that were used in the past to refer to gays and divorced and separated people, the unwed mothers etc, in the past they were quite severe.

“Many people who belonged to those groups were branded and that led to their isolation from the wider society.

“I don’t know whether this is true but I heard that in some circles, Christian circles, the suffering that these people underwent was even considered as a rightful consequence of their mistakes, so

spiritualised in that sense... But we are glad to see and hear shifts in that.”

The cardinal also spoke of the need to experience Christ for evangelisation. “An evangeliser must first be evangelised. For how can I share the person of Jesus Christ with others if I have not experienced Him myself?” he said.

Speaking about the upcoming extraordinary synod Cardinal Tagle said: “The questions asked were an invitation for people to really examine their conscience. For example, in your parish if you are aware that something is happening are you just aware? Or have you already started doing something? There’s the question of the youth, the elderly, and in the case of the Philippines, families that are separated by migration because of jobs. We know what is happening and we know about the negative effects. But what are we doing? Are we just talking about it?”

“We must remember that this is an international gathering so people are coming from different contexts. It is the same gospel and the same truth, but you cannot avoid people thinking: ‘How do I present this teaching to my people?’. No single country, diocese or parish can exhaust all possible responses, so it will be a learning moment where the diversity could help all of us.”

Asked about communion for divorced and remarried couples under certain circumstances, he said that it is not easy to say either yes or no. “Every situation for those who are divorced and remarried is quite unique. To have a general rule might be counterproductive in the end. My position at the moment is to ask, ‘Can we take every case seriously and is there, in the tradition of the Church, paths towards addressing each case individually?’ This is one issue that I hope people will appreciate is not easy to say ‘no’ or to say ‘yes’ to. We cannot give one formula for all.”

Asked how he feels about people suggesting he will be the next Pope, Cardinal Tagle said: “I treat it like a joke! It’s funny.”

The event included prayers incorporating dance and reflection, and ended with exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament led by Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster

Rachel Obordo - Catholic Herald