Vatican may allow use of condoms to combat Aids.

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Strong hints have emerged that the Vatican is preparing to change its policy on the use of condoms in the fight against Aids, after a 200-page study on the question, commissioned by the Pope, was passed to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for consideration.

"This is something that worries the Pope a lot," said Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, the head of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care, which compiled the study.

The report's completion coincides with the news that 2.9 million people died of Aids-related illnesses this year and 4.3 million more became infected. By next February, when it is predicted that Pope Benedict XVI will pronounce on the question, another 806,000 people will have become infected.

In MayThe Independent reported that the Catholic Church was on the brink of a historic U-turn. It is believed that the study urges a subtle but important change of tack. Condom use will be permitted if a man with HIV insists on having sex with his non-infected wife, as a "lesser evil".

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