

Should the Church be Concerned About Same-Sex Marriage?

What is the same-sex marriage controversy?

It is about how we understand the institution of marriage. The Church recognizes marriage as a sacred union rooted in the divine plan for creation. Our Faith also teaches that Christ elevated marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. But there is a natural purpose for marriage as well. Marriage between a man and woman creates a unique relationship of love suitable for the common good of each spouse, family, and society.

The heart of marriage is the conjugal bond or marital embrace. Here God participates in the creation new life, each unique, sacred, and made in his image. An openness to children, even if through adoption, is the beauty and fruit of marriage, and its unique responsibility.

Proponents of same-sex marriage decouple the meaning of marital love from its natural and divine purpose. The sexual embrace, open to new life, is rendered sterile, devoid of natural meaning or expression. This distorts the inherent meaning of marriage and diminishes the critical role marriage plays in society.

Can the meaning of marriage be redefined by law?

It is being inadvertently redefined in several states by judicial and legislative decree. Some courts and legislators view the marriage debate as primarily a religious squabble in which the state has no compelling interest other than to uphold state constitutional equal protection and non-discrimination statutes.

Since marriage is both a sacred union and natural institution, it does not originate with the state or the church. Marriage exists naturally as the basic cell of society which protects and replenishes it with the next generation. Marriage attaches children to both a mother and father according to the child's dignity. The societal stability this promotes is precisely why politicians and courts are obligated, not to redefine marriage or treat it as a religious question, but to protect and encourage it.

There are so few same-sex marriages, what difference does it really make?

Legalizing same-sex marriage will make it necessary for government to defend and enforce other changes in society.

For instance, when the state says that same sex couples are equivalent to opposite-sex couples, adoption laws and school curriculum will have to support this claim.

In several states, anti-discrimination statutes are trumping those who seek religious exemptions under the free-exercise clause of the First Amendment. In some places, individuals are considered unable to win elections or hold public office because they adhere to traditional teaching about sex and marriage and their moral and religious objections to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transsexual behavior are made public.

To view marriage as an equal right for any two adults who love and commit to each other is also to admit other possibilities for marriage. It is logically unavoidable. Despite the charge of fear mongering, in fact, redefining marriage in this way creates credible reason to allow marriage for many kinds of loving committed arrangements.

Can't same-sex couples be good parents?

They can certainly be good people, but they can't be both a mother and a father.

Dr. Richard Fitzgibbons, M.D., a Psychiatrist with the Catholic Medical Association, stated "social science research supports the recent statement of the Vatican that to deliberately deprive a child of a father or a mother through adoption by those in the homosexual lifestyle would inflict severe harm onto those children." Research on the needs of children for a father and a mother have been reviewed in several important recent papers from the University of South Carolina School of Medicine and the University of Utah School of Medicine.

Isn't same-sex marriage a civil right like interracial marriage?

The movement to redefine marriage to include same-sex unions has packaged its demands in the rhetoric and images of the civil rights movement. This strategy has tremendous utility.

However, the civil rights movement was about the important truth that people are equal in worth and dignity. It is incorrect to portray changing the fundamental meaning of marriage as a civil rights struggle.

Why the charge of “hate speech” and “bigotry?”

If the definitive expression of marriage is a loving and committed relationship, the Church appears to some to be determining who can express love and commitment and who cannot. Of course, the Church doesn't do this, nor does she desire to offend the dignity of homosexual persons.

This debate falls into a class of “identity politics.” For those passionate about same-sex marriage, disagreement is typically an intolerable personal affront. Advocates are not engaging an argument, they perceive this as a fight for justice and equality. Withering criticism, moral indignation, and humiliation are sometimes a tactic of identity politics. It has the effect of intimidating good people into silence.

How should we use Holy Scripture in the marriage debate?

The use of Holy Scripture in the debate about marriage has great merit, but it can also be a bad strategy, especially with non Christians. The Bible is special revelation--what God has made known to the community of faith.

By contrast, general revelation is what He has made known to everyone--Jews, Christians, Muslims, pagans, and even modern secularists. Theologians refer to the moral part of general revelation as the Natural Law. Practical arguments based on the way the world and society actually work morally can be very persuasive.

Are homosexuals persons welcome in the Catholic Church?

Yes. The Catechism of the Catholic Church recognizes that individuals may have homosexual inclinations, and insists that “They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.” (par. 2358)

COURAGE is a Catholic ministry headed by a very holy priest by the name of Fr. John Harvey. Courage reaches out to those with same-sex attraction so they can live a chaste life, grow in holiness, live a life in union with Jesus and in accord with the Natural Law, frequent the Sacraments and immerse themselves in deep prayer and daily mortification. Courage can be reached at <http://www.couragerc.net>

What can we do as Catholics to strengthen traditional marriage?

- ◆ Through prayer and study, meditate on God's plan for marriage and family life so that, as we grow in holiness, so will our witness to society.
- ◆ Call or visit the Office of Marriage and Family Life for ideas and existing programs that will strengthen marriage and family life in your parish.
- ◆ We all must be willing to make our voices and convictions heard in the public square. One of the most important functions of the **Colorado Catholic Conference** is its contact with the state legislature. The key to this contact is the legislative network. Join the network at their website www.cocatholicconference.org and become informed about how you can influence public policy.
- ◆ For more explanation visit the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at <http://www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/samesexfaqs.shtml>

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Questions & Answers

