

Male and Female He Created Them The Church and “Same-Sex Marriages”

ISSUE: Why does the Church oppose government-sanctioned homosexual “marriages”?

DISCUSSION: Two men cannot legitimately marry each other, nor can two women, no matter what any earthly judicial or legislative body may say. Marriage is by nature defined by the conjugal act between one man and one woman, a monogamous or exclusive union in which the two become one in a lifelong partnership (cf. Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:4-6).

This truth is understandable not only through divine Revelation, but also through natural reason. For by nature, man and woman are made for each other. They complement each other both physically and socially. In contrast, homosexual relationships are unnatural and do not contribute to the growth of society. In fidelity to the teachings of Christ, the Catholic Church opposes homosexual activity and state approval of homosexual relationships.

The Catholic Church teaches that Christ elevated marriage to the level of a sacrament. A husband and his wife are called to imitate and participate in the nuptial union of Christ and His bride, the Church (cf. Eph. 5:21-33), in a communion of life and love that is open to the gift of children (cf. Catechism, no. 1652).

God created man in His image and likeness. He created them male and female, so that through marriage they might reflect the communal love of the Holy Trinity (cf. Gen. 1:26-28). From all eternity, the Father pours His entire being into His Son, and the Son into the Father. The eternal bond of love between Father and Son is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity. This is an oversimplified explanation of a most profound mystery, the community of Persons in whose image we were created.

A man and a woman become one in marriage in a mysterious way that reveals the unity shared by the Father and the Son (cf. Jn. 17:22-23). As the infinitely loving bond between the Father and Son constitutes the Third Person of the Trinity, so in a similar way a child embodies the love of a husband and wife. The union of husband and wife is so profound that nine months later the couple often have to give it a name when a child is born! That is why the Church teaches that marriage is a communion of life and love ordered toward the good of the couple and the procreation and education of children, and that there is an unbreakable bond between the love-giving and life-giving aspects of marital love (cf., Catechism, nos. 1660, 2366).

God’s Plan for Marriage

Some people mistakenly believe that the Church has revised her teaching on homosexuality in recent years. On the contrary, the Church has never taught that suffering from the disorder of a homosexual inclination is in itself sinful. But the Church has always taught that homosexual acts are “intrinsically” and “objectively” disordered (*ibid.*, nos. 2357-58) and “gravely contrary to chastity” (*ibid.*, no. 2396). Further, having an “innate impulse” (not “instinct”) does not mean such a condition is normal or good, just as fallen man’s inclination toward sin is not normal or good.

God’s wonderful plan for marriage allows husband and wife to make up for each other’s deficiencies and thereby complete each other (cf. Gen. 2:18). This is known as *complementarity*, in which the husband and wife become one through the mutual giving and receiving of marital relations. This unity is reflected in the crowning fruit of their union: children. Although some married couples unfortunately cannot have children, they still complete one another through the expression of mutual love.

In contrast, homosexual *activity* lacks complementarity, but rather involves an illusory and vain attempt at communion. Under no circumstances can it be approved (Catechism, no. 2357).

If we abandon the monogamous union of husband and wife as the standard of marriage, there will be no logical argument against “marriages” between homosexuals as well as between polygamous heterosexuals. Government

endorsement of homosexual “marriages” necessarily implies the acceptance of decadent polygamy and will only further undermine the moral fiber of our society.

As is the case with every dysfunction within the home, children suffer the most from the homosexual relationships of their parents. For some children, pain and confusion results when one parent leaves the other for a homosexual “union.” Others adopted into a “family” of homosexual “parents” will probably never experience the example and natural beauty of a true marital relationship. Furthermore, homosexual unions often promote the development of reproductive technology to the exclusion of procreation according to God’s design. Such technology makes the child a mere product of technology and denies the child the natural dignity and respect he deserves. Further, this technology denies the child his right to be born of a mother and father known to him (cf. Catechism, nos. 2376-77).

Teaching of Bishops

The U.S. Bishops’ Committees on Marriage and Family and Domestic Policy likewise affirm this perennial teaching:

The Roman Catholic Church believes that marriage is a faithful, exclusive and lifelong union between one man and one woman joined as husband and wife in an intimate partnership of life and love. This union was established by God with its own proper laws. By reason of its very nature, therefore, marriage exists for the mutual love and support of the spouses and for the procreation and education of children. These two purposes, the unitive [love-giving] and the procreative [life-giving], are equal and inseparable. The institution of marriage has a very important relationship to the continuation of the human race, to the total development of the human person and to the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family and of society.

Furthermore, we believe the natural institution of marriage has been blessed and elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament.... Because they are married in the Lord, the spouses acquire a special relationship to each other and to society. Their love becomes a living image of the manner in which the Lord personally loves his people and is united with them. Living a Christian, sacramental marriage becomes their fundamental way of attaining salvation.

Because the marital relationship offers benefits unlike any other to persons, to society and to the church, we wish to make it clear that the institution of marriage, as the union of one man and one woman, must be preserved, protected and promoted in both private and public realms. At a time when family life is under significant stress, the principled defense of marriage is an urgent necessity for the well-being of children and families, and for the common good of society.

Thus, we oppose attempts to grant the legal status of marriage to a relationship between persons of the same sex. No same-sex union can realize the unique and full potential which the marital relationship expresses. For this reason, our opposition to “same-sex marriage” is not an instance of unjust discrimination or animosity toward homosexual persons. In fact, the Catholic Church teaches emphatically that individuals and society must respect the basic human dignity of all persons, including those with a homosexual orientation. Homosexual persons have a right to and deserve our respect, compassion, understanding and defense against bigotry, attacks and abuse.

We therefore urge Catholics and all our fellow citizens to commit themselves both to upholding the human dignity of every person and to upholding the distinct and irreplaceable community of marriage.¹

Courage to Be Chaste

If you know of someone who engages in homosexual activity, resist the temptation to act uncharitably. Depending on the circumstances, you may experience anger, frustration, repugnance, or any number of negative feelings toward the person. These feelings are normal, and of themselves are not sinful. However, we must love the sinner and hate the sin. We must not neglect any opportunity to witness in charity the truths of the faith. We must

reach out to them in love to affirm their human dignity but not their sin. Most importantly, we must pray for them, that their hearts would be softened to accept their trial with courage and avoid any occasions of sin.

If you yourself struggle with the trial of homosexual inclinations, do not despair. The Church stands willing to strengthen you in your efforts to remain chaste. Through frequent reception of Confession and Holy Eucharist, and through the prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture, you can identify and avoid occasions of sin and root your life solidly in Christ. Additionally, there are many people who have the same struggle and who win. Several organizations within the Church assist people with homosexual tendencies to live according to the teachings of Christ. If you, or someone you know, is in need of assistance from one of these groups, do not hesitate to call Catholics United for the Faith's Information Services department toll-free at (800) MY-FAITH (693-2484). The staff will refer you to organizations that can help you.

¹ *Origins* (August 1, 1996), 133.

Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

1. Why is marriage reserved only for a husband and a wife in a monogamous relationship? How would I explain this to someone who is not Christian? How would I explain this to someone with homosexual tendencies?
2. Do I understand the important distinction between loving the sinner and hating the sin? Is it possible to live this balance? Am I concerned about showing Christ-like compassion as well as not compromising the truth?
3. Do I truly strive to love homosexual persons, even when they are not at present willing to abandon an openly homosexual lifestyle? Do I understand that for most homosexuals, the inclination to engage in homosexual acts usually constitutes a trial (Catechism, no. 2358)? What can I do to help people who are going through such a trial? What can I do to help their family members?

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