

29th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Cycle B

October 21, 2012 7:30 and 9am Masses

Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

The Marriage Law

This weekend we are speaking for a few minutes on the issue of same-sex marriage.

Archbishop Lori has sent a letter on this topic to all pastors. He directed us to share the letter with you and it is enclosed in today's bulletin.

The Archbishop has also asked us to include this in our homilies. So, I am doing that and then I also want to share another reflection with you.

Why Not Same-Sex Marriage?

Our official Catholic teaching is that marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

Our Church holds that nature shows that only from the union of one man and one woman can new life arise. Only through such a union has every person on earth come into being.

Our Church teaching sees the procreation of new life as an essential part of marriage. The Church states that there are two ends or purposes of marriage.

1) It is for the love and fulfillment of man and woman. And 2) it is also equally for the procreation and upbringing of children.

The Church sees this as how God has made the institution of marriage. This is the way nature has been created and we cannot change it.

Because of this, our official Catholic teaching opposes the redefining of marriage to include same-sex relationships. The Church holds that this kind of relationship is not capable of bringing new life into the world and the definition of marriage should not be changed to allow this.

Other Reasons

Archbishop Lori also cites some other reasons for opposing same-sex marriage.

For example, the Archbishop asserts that many of the rights that would be obtained by granting marriage to gay couples are already granted under Maryland law. He argues that same-sex marriage is a civil issue, but it is not only a civil issue.

The Archbishop states that it could have effects on how religious-sponsored hospitals and charities are able to operate. Finally, he expresses his concern about long-term consequences that redefining marriage might have on children and on the family.

So, the Archbishop asks us to consider all of this in forming our conscience and in voting on this issue. This is Question 6 on the Maryland ballot this November.

Respect for Others

Now, I want to add one other reflection.

It is important that the Church's position on this legislation not be used as grounds for prejudice or discrimination. To say it positively, it is important that we are respectful of persons of same-sex orientation.

Here is why I am saying this today. I have listened to some parents and grandparents of persons of same-sex orientation.

I have listened to some of these persons themselves. I have also talked with some counselors and therapists.

I believe that the Jesus of the gospels calls us to be respectful of all persons. At times, the way we teach on this issue – the way we teach, the wording we use – at times this is diminishing and may contribute to prejudice.

Some of our wording has been unfortunate. So, we as Catholics and all Christians need to speak and act respectfully.

There is a real issue of concern here. At least one significant study shows that teens of same-sex orientation are five times more likely to attempt suicide than others.

One professional assures me that this finding is just the tip of the iceberg – the tip of the problem. This same study shows that a supportive environment in our schools, communities, and churches can make a real difference.

Programs about bullying or about respect for diversity are helpful and crucial. So, prejudice or disrespect in word or in action is not living the truth of the gospel.

Care and respect is the way of Jesus. It is the way that will lead others and us closer to God and the Lord Jesus.