

Statement on Same-Sex Marriage

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The essential Roman Catholic position.

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 and the procreative, are equal and inseparable. The insti-

tution 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. This means that Christian marriage is more than a contract. 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 wellbeing 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

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commit themselves both to upholding the human dignity of every person and to upholding the distinct and irreplaceable community of marriage.