



Speaking the truth in love

Eph 4:15

Does Pope Francis support same-sex marriage?

A number of commentators have recently suggested that loyalty to Catholic teaching, and especially to Pope Francis, would allow, even require, support for same-sex marriage; by implication, the Australian bishops misunderstand Catholic teaching and have been disloyal to Pope Francis by saying Catholics should vote NO. But what has Pope Francis actually said about this?

In April 2010, while still Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he issued a strongly worded pastoral letter on behalf of his fellow bishops against the redefinition of marriage in Argentine law. He reminded public authorities of their responsibility to protect marriage and its unique contribution to the common good. He pointed out that the state is not discriminating unjustly when it requires a man and a woman to make a marriage: "it merely recognises a natural reality". The future pope continued: "A marriage – made up of man and woman – is not the same as the union of two people of the same sex. To distinguish is not to discriminate but to respect differences... At a time when we place emphasis on the richness of pluralism and social and cultural diversity, it is a contradiction to minimise fundamental human differences. A father is not the same as a mother. We cannot teach future generations that preparing yourself for planning a family based on the stable relationship between a man and a woman is the same as living with a person of the same sex."

But has Cardinal Bergoglio changed his tune since becoming Pope Francis? He has famously emphasized the need for the Church to be close to people, accompanying them pastorally amidst the complexity of their lives, and helping to heal their wounds. He is acutely aware that many people with same-sex attraction feel alienated from the Church and society. He says that he will not judge homosexuals who are genuinely searching for God and seeking to do the good.

However, sensitive pastoral care towards gay and lesbian people, including same-sex couples, is consistent with upholding the truth of marriage as the lifelong union of man and woman open to procreation. Indeed, Pope Francis has been critical of the "narcissistic individualism" of contemporary culture, which promotes "a freedom disengaged from responsibility" and the common good – whether among heterosexual or homosexual persons. He has criticised "ideologies that attack the family project directly". These cultural forces, he thinks, undermine the natural and divinely-given plan for marriage and the family.¹ And he argues that upon the health of marriages and marriage-based families depend not only happiness and holiness for many individuals, but also the transmission of faith and ethics, the vigour of economies and politics, the care of life and the generations, and thus the very direction of peoples through history.²

In this context Pope Francis has repeatedly argued that the legalisation of same-sex marriage would be "a step backwards for humanity" (an 'anthropological regression')³ and gravely harm us all – homosexuals included – because the health of the 'human ecology' depends on a healthy marital culture.⁴ Such a culture draws the two sexes together in married life and ensures that, as far as

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possible, children receive the gift of the contributions of both male and female parents, committed to each other and to them.⁵ Quoting from the Australian Bishops' Pastoral, *Don't Mess With Marriage*, and making it his own in his celebrated exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis insists that each of the spouses "contributes in a distinct way to the upbringing of a child. Respecting a child's dignity means affirming his or her need and natural right to have a mother and a father."⁶ The 'ideological colonisation' resulting from confusing presentations of sexuality and marriage disfigures God's plan for creation, denies children their natural rights, harms individuals and communities, and must be resisted.⁷ Yet sadly "many countries are witnessing a legal deconstruction of the family, tending to adopt models based almost exclusively on the autonomy of the individual will."⁸

Far from revoking the Catholic Church's two-thousand-year-long insistence that (according to divine revelation and the natural law) marriage can only be between a man and a woman,⁹ Pope Francis has been a strong advocate of that very position. Those claiming his support in their campaign for a Yes vote in the forthcoming plebiscite have either not read him or are deliberately misrepresenting him. To vote with Pope Francis is to VOTE NO.

Yours fraternally,



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¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family* (2016), 33-34, 39-40 etc.; *Address to the Faculty and Students of the John Paul II Institute for Studies of Marriage and the Family*, 27 October 2016.

² *Amoris Laetitia*, 52.

³ Edward Pentin, 'Pope repeats that same-sex 'marriage' is "anthropological regression' *National Catholic Register*, 3 January 2014.

⁴ Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 5 June 2013; *Address to the European Parliament*, Strasbourg, 25 November 2014; *Address to the Filipino Authorities and Diplomatic Corps*, Manila, 16 January 2015.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Address to the European Bishops Conference*, 3 October 2014; *Address to the European Parliament*, Strasbourg, 25 November 2014; *Address to the Filipino Authorities and Diplomatic Corps*, Manila, 16 January 2015; *Amoris Laetitia*, 81-83, 166ff, 172ff etc.

⁶ *Amoris Laetitia*, 172; cf. *Address to the International Colloquium on the Complementarity of Man and Woman*, Rome, 17 November 2014.

⁷ Likewise in Pope Francis, *Address to the International Colloquium on the Complementarity of Man and Woman*, Rome, 17 November 2014; *Address to Filipino Authorities and Diplomatic Corps*, Manila, 16 January 2015.

⁸ *Amoris Laetitia*, 53.

⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons*, 3 June 2003.

“Changing the definition of marriage affects every Australian. It affects not just LGBTI Australians, it affects everybody.”

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, 18 Oct 2016, ABC RN Breakfast

Freedoms

- **Freedom of speech.** Anti-discrimination laws have been used to restrict speech on issues relating to marriage. The case of Archbishop Julian Porteous being brought before the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commission for distributing the Bishops Pastoral letter about Catholic teaching on marriage is a matter of free speech more than freedom of religion. Consider the case of the Deputy Chief Psychiatrist of Victoria who in 2012 was forced to resign his position on that state’s Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. His crime: he had told a Senate Inquiry that children do better on average with a Mum and Dad rather than being in a single or same-sex parent family.
- **Freedom of belief.** The Senate Select Committee was told that largest-ever survey of LGBTI Australians showed that 59 per cent of respondents didn’t want exemptions even for ministers of religion let alone ordinary believers. The Bills presented so far offer little or no comfort on this matter. In June 2017, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said his party was working towards compelling priests to perform same-sex weddings. Lay people in most countries that have legalised same-sex marriage are being bullied and harassed into assisting eg through supplying services to weddings and events in favour of same-sex marriage.
- **Freedom of association.** Even in Australia, people have been made to resign from voluntary roles performed outside of work if deemed incompatible with “equality.” Former PwC executive Mark Allaby was forced to step down from the board of the Australian Christian Lobby because it conflicted with “the best interests of PwC.” He moved to IBM, and was there made to step down from the board of another group, the Lachlan Macquarie Institute, which was deemed to not have a pro-LGBT stance.
- **Freedom of conscience.** In countries where marriage has been redefined, examples abound of wedding services providers who have been sued or fined for declining to participate in same-sex wedding ceremonies. Bill Shorten once indicated that a future Labor government will remove any protections provided for those service providers who do not want to participate in same-sex weddings. Some Greens and other MPs have been even stronger on disallowing any dissent in this matter.

Gender

- **De-gendering of society.** Transgender issues have closely followed marriage redefinition in other countries because removing gender from marriage is a big step towards making gender irrelevant. In July 2017, the UK Government Equalities Office called the ability to change gender legally by simply filing in a form “building on the progress” of marriage redefinition. In Canada, referring to a person other than their preferred gender pronoun is punishable by law.
- **The removal of mothers and fathers.** A natural consequence of the de-gendering is a diminishment of the difference between, and importance of, mothers and fathers. In Ontario, Canada, the *All Families Are Equal Act 2016* has replaced all references to “mother” or “father” in the law to “parent,” and birth certificates now allow up to four “parents” with equal rights to the child to be included.

Education

- **Changes to sex education.** Once the law on marriage is changed, sex education changes to include all forms of sexual activity. In Canada, such lessons were optional before same-sex marriage was legalised (like the Safe Schools program) but have now become compulsory, even for faith-based schools. Homosexuality is introduced as an option in Year Three.
- **Increase in gender dysphoria.** Programs like Safe Schools have been linked with an increase in gender dysphoria cases in children. In the year that Safe Schools was introduced in Victoria, the Royal Children's Hospital treated six children for gender dysphoria. Six years later, that number was 250.
- **The removal of parental rights.** Canadian parent Steve Tourloukis' request to remove his children from these lessons was refused by the school because LGBTI ideas were embedded throughout the curriculum, and school administrators considered traditional views of sexuality and marriage to be a form of bullying. The Ontario Supreme Court acknowledged his parental rights were being infringed upon, but sided with the school.
- **The closing of "non-compliant" schools.** Faith-based schools which refuse to teach in favour of same-sex marriage and the current ideology on homosexuality and gender identity issues are being faced with closure. In the UK, Vishnitz Girls School, an orthodox Jewish school has failed two education authority inspections and now faces closure for refusing to teach girls between the ages of 3 and 11 years about sexual orientation and gender re-assignment. In Canada, the Law Society of Upper Canada refuses to recognise the law degrees of graduates from Trinity Western University because the students sign a personal agreement to reserve their own sexual activity for heterosexual marriage.