



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

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Adoption by Homosexuals/Same Sex Marriages/ Domestic Partnerships and Civil Unions

The traditional values of chastity, the sanctity of marriage and family, as well as the development of sound parent-child relationships, and the freedom of parents to rear their children in a healthy and moral climate, are critical to a well-ordered society. All of these are under assault today and can be further threatened by poorly conceived legislation.

Adoption by Homosexuals

The best interest of a child is the primary consideration in his or her placement for adoption. While we affirm and defend the human and civil rights of homosexual persons, we also affirm and defend the Church's teaching on marriage and family. Laws allowing adoption by homosexuals may have the effect of legitimizing homosexual activity. We oppose any proposal which does not maintain a distinction between sexual orientation and sexual activity. Our concerns extend to the Florida policy allowing homosexuals to be foster parents, even though these arrangements are temporary and not permanent.

We understand the desire to tolerate adoption by homosexuals under the pretext of avoiding discrimination. We are against unjust discrimination against gays and lesbians, but we are also opposed to a policy which will in effect give legal sanction to homosexual acts. It is a proper role of government to unmask ways in which tolerance may unwittingly be used to advance an unwarranted agenda, and it is also appropriate for government to avoid exposing young people to erroneous ideas about sexuality and marriage.

Clearly the temptation is to give legal recognition to a reality that does not seem to cause injustice to anyone. But there is a difference between homosexual behavior that occurs in private, and the same behavior as a relationship that is approved in law to the point where it becomes part of our legal structure. It is our belief that this result would be contrary to the common good. We also believe that legal recognition of homosexual unions will devalue the institution of marriage. We do not believe that the principles of respect and discrimination should be invoked to support legal recognition of homosexual unions.

Same Sex Marriages

The Florida Catholic Conference supports the existing Florida law recognizing marriage as "between one man and one woman as husband and wife and banning same sex marriage" (Section 741.212 FS). We support proposals that will strengthen that ban, provided they do not discriminate unduly against gay and lesbian persons. Human dignity and human rights are God-given; they are not earned nor are they legislated. Our tradition affirms these rights, seeking human respect, economic and personal security and social equality for all people.

We affirm with Pope John Paul II that marriage "...undergirds the institution of the family, is constituted by the covenant whereby a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its very nature, is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children." Only such a union can be recognized and ratified as a marriage in society. Other interpersonal unions, which do not fulfill the above conditions, cannot be recognized, despite certain growing trends that represent the serious threat to the future of the family and of society itself. (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1601) The dignity of the marriage union must be respected and safeguarded against any attempts to undermine it. (Cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, No. 216)

Domestic Partners/Civil Unions

Domestic partner/civil union legislation can take various forms, but we do not support proposals that have the effect of giving legitimacy to either homosexual or heterosexual cohabitation outside of marriage. Such legitimacy does not now exist and to give it approval would send the harmful message to our youth that such relationships are natural, moral and the legal equivalence of marriage.

The Need for Respect, Compassion and Sensitivity

Human dignity and human rights are God-given; they are not earned nor are they legislated. Our tradition affirms these rights, seeking human respect, economic and personal security, and social equality for all people.

With respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. (Cf. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, No. 29, Documents of Vatican Council II.)

Homosexuals, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. They have a right to respect, friendship and justice. "While the Church teaches that homosexual acts are immoral, she does distinguish between engaging in homosexual acts and having a homosexual inclination." (*Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 14, 2006.)

Based on these principles, the Florida Catholic Conference will:

- Affirm and defend the human and civil rights of homosexual persons, as well as others.
- Oppose discrimination against all persons. Legislation must not make homosexual behavior or lifestyle a protected or approved activity, but rather prohibit discrimination against persons.
- Affirm and defend the Church's teaching on marriage and family.
- Maintain the distinction between sexual orientation and sexual activity.
- Work to assure that society's concern for the family, for parental rights, and for all citizens is protected in any proposed legislation.