



Allocutio



Presentata Curia 26th July 2012

Allocutio: Gay marriage – why not

The word matrimony comes from the latin *matrimonium* meaning “the state of being a mother”. Marriage has always been seen as in some way connected to children. The Bible is very clear about how it sees marriage. “So God created man and woman in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (Gen 1:27-28). In the other biblical account of the creation we read, “Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Jesus in his teaching on marriage quotes these two texts making it clear that Christ sees marriage as a union of man and woman (Mk 10:6-8). And interestingly the very next passage in the Gospel after Jesus has spoken about marriage concerns children (Mk 10:13ss).

Let look at it from another angle. There is a world of difference in nature between a heterosexual union which has the capacity to produce offspring and to ensure the continuation of the human race and a same sex couple who simply do not have such capacity. To equate the two is to distort the meaning of natural reality and therefore to go counter to what the Lord Creator has designed. While we must be sympathetic to those who through no fault of their own find themselves to have a homosexual orientation it is of no help to them or reality to try and equate a same-sex relationship with marriage which both by the natural order and by positive divine teaching is about that special relationship between a man and a women which has the potential to produce offspring. Marriage is meant to provide the environment in which two people through their love for each other beget children and embrace them in their circle of love. This cannot be done by a same-sex couple.

We have two realities then. The first is an age-old institution involving men and women who have united to provide new life and family for the coming generation. It has always been there and was taken up by Christ to be made a sacrament. There is another reality involving people who are not heterosexual, many by no fault of their own. They do not want to be treated as rejects but to feel included. But by giving in to demands for so-called gay marriage do we solve anything? We can find other ways of respecting such people than completely rewriting the meaning of marriage.

It is worth noting that the Church of England in its response to the British government has adopted a position not very different from our own. In their submission to the London Government the Church of England says that their insistence on the traditional understanding of marriage is not a knee-jerk reaction to change but is based on the conviction that the consequences of change will not be beneficial at all for society. What makes marriage unique “is that it embodies the underlying, objective distinctiveness of man and woman in the biological union of man and woman which potentially brings to the relationship the fruitfulness of procreation” (n.10). If you redefine marriage to take in same sex couples where do you make room for that special relationship of man and women with its potential to create new life? That relationship is different from a homosexual couple. There has to be a place for sexual difference since it is so much a reality in life. And homosexuals should recognise and respect that. Put another way: were a government to redefine marriage so that it included people of the same



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sex, then heterosexual couples would have every right to demand a special recognition for their uniqueness.

No doubt were government to redefine marriage so that its definition radically altered the traditional view based on natural realities then it would create a huge problem for many people who do not believe in that, even for those not of the catholic faith or even for some of no faith. It would create very special difficulties for people of religious faith who would be faced with a real dilemma. Because they would be forced to ask themselves whether, by participating in an institution which so radically changed the meaning of marriage, they were acting at variance with God's will. And that in turn could create a new set of problems for government as many people would opt not to register their marriages with the State for authentically held religious reasons.

It of course may never come to that. We hope that common sense and the weight of rational reasoning will win out. There is a real call from the heart of those who cannot help their homosexual orientation. They do not want to be persecuted nor discriminate against. They want to be treated as real persons. All that is fair. We do need to give a sympathetic recognition to these people.

But equally it has to be acknowledged that there is something unique about that love of a man and a woman who come together and beget children from their unique love. Because they provide for the continuance of the human race they are quite different from same sex unions and so require a special recognition. This is not, as the Church of England document points out, a case of banning some people from an ancient institution but rather of asserting that this institution exists precisely for the uniqueness of the heterosexual union.

We are dealing with different realities and so whatever the solution it cannot be to alter the traditional meaning of marriage which has stood the test of time, from even before biblical times through many ages and forms of government. It is too deep for that. Other solutions are needed.

Let us ask Our Lady's help in this that she may win us as the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to help find solutions but also that she will win us the courage given by the Holy Spirit to stand firm for God's ways.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill