



FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

The nonpartisan public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Florida

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Statement in Response to the Redefinition of Marriage in Florida January 5, 2015

Tomorrow, with the expiration of a stay on a U.S. District Court ruling, marriage licenses for same sex couples are being issued for the first time in our state. The Catholic bishops of Florida are deeply disappointed by Judge Hinkle's ruling, as well as refusals by the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court of the United States to stay the decision while appeals pend.

The conjugal nature of a marriage between a man and a woman has provided for millennia the basis for norms of marital exclusivity and permanence that made possible stable families necessary for human flourishing. In redefining marriage to include same sex couples, the judge has in effect overturned a state constitutional amendment approved by nearly 62% of the electorate in a 2008 ballot initiative.

How society understands marriage has great public significance. Because of this, redefining civil "marriage" to include two persons of the same sex will have far-reaching consequences in society. Such a change advances the notion that marriage is only about the affective gratification of consenting adults. Such a redefinition of marriage does nothing to safeguard a child's right to a mother and father and to be raised in a stable family where his or her development and well-being is served to the greatest extent possible.

Redefinition of marriage will have implications not yet fully understood. The term "marriage" can be found in family law, employment law, trusts and estates, healthcare law, tax law, property law, and many others. These laws also affect and pervasively regulate public and private institutions including religious institutions, such as churches, schools, and hospitals. Besides the predictably disruptive effects, imposing this redefinition of marriage threatens both religious liberty and the freedom of individuals to conscientiously object as already seen in those states that have redefined marriage to accommodate same sex couples.

Marriage based on the complementarity of the sexes is the lifeblood of family, and family is the foundation of our society. The crisis that sadly the family is experiencing today will only be aggravated by imposing this redefinition of marriage. Society must rediscover the irreplaceable roles of both mother and father who bring unique gifts to the education and rearing of children.

For the benefit of society and the common good, the conjugal understanding of marriage between a husband and a wife and complementarity of a father and mother must be preserved so that the family can be a school of love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, mutual respect, patience and humility in the midst of a world darkened by selfishness and conflict.

Our parishes, family life offices and other ministries are available to assist those seeking to understand the truth and beauty of marriage and to assist husbands and wives to strengthen their bonds. Additional resources can be found at www.marriageuniqueforareason.org and www.foryourmarriage.org / www.portumatrimonio.org.

We look forward to the first visit of Pope Francis to the United States, where he will lead the [World Meeting of Families](#) in Philadelphia, from September 22-27, 2015. For each of us, our true glory is in our capacity to love as God loves; and no better means exists to teach the meaning of love than the family. May we speak the truth in love, and may family life led by father and mother flourish again in our state, nation and throughout the world.