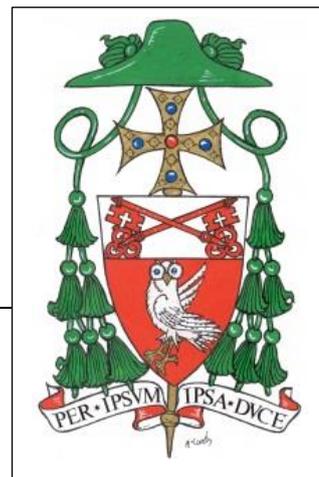


**Diocese of Wollongong**

**STATEMENT FROM BISHOP PETER INGHAM**

**TO BE READ AT ALL MASSES  
ON WEEKEND OF 2 & 3 SEPTEMBER 2017**



My Dear Parishioners

**CHANGE IN THE DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says about people of same-sex attraction, “They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.” (CCC, para 2358)

While I strongly denounce any form of bigotry or homophobia towards same-sex couples who wish to marry, we need to express our convictions about what marriage really is and pursue truth with a compassion that both values those we are speaking *about* and those we are speaking *to* – otherwise we lose the right to be heard.

The particular kind of relationship we call marriage has been held almost universally by civilisations throughout history, irrespective of religion and politics. Up until 15 years ago, no culture in history ever defined marriage as anything other than between members of the opposite sex.

And, across the breadth of human cultures and religious faiths, we contend for the truth that our society is best-served by retaining the traditional understanding of marriage as the union of a man and a woman, voluntarily entered into for life, and provides the basis for the creation of a family in which, wherever possible, children can be raised in a loving and stable environment by their own mother and father.

In human terms, there is nothing more powerful than the union of a man and a woman, which is the only relationship that can bring about new life. It has no equal.

Already in Australia, same-sex couples in civil partnerships have all the civil and legal benefits that come with marriage. I ask your prayerful discernment to reflect on what may flow on from changing the Marriage Act. It has far-reaching implications:

- our freedom to speak;
- our freedom of belief and conscience;
- what is taught in schools about sexuality and its expressions;
- about associated extreme gender theory;
- and the removal of the rights of parents and religious faiths to express any objections.

Such issues have already become serious realities in countries where same-sex marriage has become lawful.

We need to reflect deeply on this issue before we vote. Thank you for listening to my thoughts on this important matter.

With every blessing

Bishop Peter Ingham  
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

1 September 2017  
[PWI:lt/293]