

# Homily Notes/Speaking points on Marriage and the Plebiscite

## Some thoughts on Marriage from Pope Francis

### God's masterpiece

Pope Francis grounds his teaching on marriage and the family by reflecting on the creation accounts in Genesis by pointing out that in “the Book of Genesis, when God completes his work of creation and makes his masterpiece; the masterpiece is man and woman.”<sup>1</sup> God’s masterpiece has a special quality because “it is not man alone who is the image of God or woman alone who is the image of God, but man and woman as a couple who are the image of God.”<sup>2</sup>

### Equal but different

God made woman and man equal but different. The difference “is not meant to stand in opposition, or to subordinate, but is for the sake of communion and generation.”<sup>3</sup> The difference is the basis for a “covenant between man and woman”<sup>4</sup> and when it is lived properly “the earth is filled with harmony and trust,”<sup>5</sup> and “its failure deprives the earth of warmth and darkens the sky of hope.”<sup>6</sup>

### A unique union of man and woman

Pope Francis views “the union of man and woman in marriage as a unique, natural, fundamental and beautiful good for people, families, communities and societies.”<sup>7</sup> He also sees that “as a social institution, marriage protects and shapes a shared commitment to deeper growth in love and commitment to one another, for the good of society as a whole. That is why marriage is more than a fleeting fashion; it is of enduring importance.”<sup>8</sup>

### Motherhood and fatherhood

One of the most fundamental aspects of marriage is parenting. Pope Francis has taught that “every child has a right to receive love from a mother and a father; both are necessary for a child’s integral and harmonious development.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore this right is not just concerned with “the love of father and mother as individuals, but also of their mutual love, perceived as the source of one’s life and the solid foundation of the family.”<sup>10</sup> Consequently “only the exclusive and indissoluble union between a man and a woman has a plenary [comprehensive, complete or full] role to play in society as a stable commitment that bears fruit in new life.”<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusion

In our current historical context in which the definition of marriage is being questioned, Pope Francis has stated that “as Christians, we can hardly stop advocating marriage simply to avoid countering contemporary sensibilities, or out of a desire to be fashionable.”<sup>12</sup> These thoughts from Pope Francis should give us a reason to reflect on what is at stake in the current marriage debate.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience, 29 April 2015

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience, 15 April 2015

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience, 15 April 2015

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience, 15 April 2015

<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience, 15 April 2015

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience, 15 April 2015

<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, Address to the International Colloquium on the Complementarity between Man and Woman, 7 November 2014

<sup>8</sup> *Amoris Laetitia* 131

<sup>9</sup> *Amoris Laetitia* 172

<sup>10</sup> *Amoris Laetitia* 172

<sup>11</sup> *Amoris Laetitia* 52

<sup>12</sup> *Amoris Laetitia* 35

## Consequences stemming from changing the legal definition of Marriage

- **Freedom of speech.** Anti-discrimination laws have been used to restrict speech on issues relating to marriage. Archbishop Julian Porteous was brought before the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commission for distributing a letter about Catholic teaching on marriage.
- **Freedom in the workplace.** A Melbourne IT specialist was sacked after he told his colleagues that he did not want his kids to be exposed to the Safe Schools program. His employer accused him of “creating an unsafe work environment.” In another case, a Victorian public servant was given a warning for complaining about being pressured to take part in a gay pride march. An Alice Springs teacher was also threatened with disciplinary action for expressing opposition to “same-sex marriage” on his personal Facebook account.<sup>13</sup>
- **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.
- **Erasing the significance of biological sex.** Same-sex marriage came into effect in the United Kingdom in 2014. This year, the UK Government Equalities Office streamlined the process for a person to legally change their gender by removing the need for a medical certificate.<sup>14</sup>
- **The removal 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.<sup>15</sup>
- **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 in 2005, but have now become compulsory, even for faith-based schools.<sup>16</sup>
- **The removal of parental rights.** Canadian parents who have tried to remove their children from “Safe Schools” style sex education classes have been blocked by the courts.<sup>17</sup>
- **The closing of “non-compliant” schools.** 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.<sup>18</sup>

To date there are no adequate assurances that similar consequences will not also follow a redefinition of marriage in Australia

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<sup>13</sup> *Christians under siege, religious freedom inquiry hears*, The Australian, Rebecca Urban, May 6, 2017

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-action-to-promote-lgbt-equality>

<sup>15</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/11/30/all-families-are-equal-act-bill-28-wynne\\_n\\_13326140.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/11/30/all-families-are-equal-act-bill-28-wynne_n_13326140.html)

<sup>16</sup> <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/ontario-liberals-to-introduce-updated-version-of-sex-education-curriculum-pulled-in-2010-over-religious-objections>

<sup>17</sup> *Same-sex education ruling an ‘attack on parents’ rights’*, The Australian, Joe Kelly, November 30, 2016

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/private-jewish-school-lgbt-issues-fail-ofsted-inspection-vishnitz-girls-london-orthodox-sex-british-a7809221.html>

## Speaking Points

### Marriage

- Marriage is about bringing men and women together as husbands and wives so that they can become father and mother to any children that they have.
- Marriage is an essential social institution for ensuring and encouraging children to be brought up by their natural mother and father.
- Marriage has long been recognised by governments and the broader community because of the biological reality that sexual relationships between women and men often produce children. Governments do not have a public interest in whether two people happen to love each other, but they do have a public interest in the type of relationship that produces and brings up children.
- Many marriages do not bring about children, but where children are born they have the right to grow up with their mother and father where possible and marriage helps achieve this.
- Redefining marriage would deliberately create motherless or fatherless families, which would intentionally deprive children of at least one of their biological parents.
- Any meaningful definition of marriage will exclude some relationships, so we need to draw the line for good reasons not arbitrary ones.
- If all loving and committed relationships are described as “marriage”, then there exists no boundary line to what is considered as a marriage.

### Religious freedom

- Religious freedom and freedom of conscience are essential rights and the ability to express our faith respectfully and to live it out accordingly are key freedoms for Catholics and other people of faith.
- The Church engages in policy debate in the public square because it has insights to offer Catholics and all people of goodwill.
- We settle differences by trying to persuade others, not by intimidation, silencing, name-calling or violence.
- We believe in the dignity and worth of all human beings.
- But also believe in the right respectfully to advocate public policy positions that we believe serve the common good.
- The Catholic Church, and all Catholic people, must be free to live a Catholic way of life. That’s not a freedom limited to worshiping in church buildings, but to living our lives as Christians in the wider world. This freedom must of course be balanced with other important rights.
- Recognising the right to freedom of religion, of conscience and of thought, helps our community to debate important issues and resolve them peacefully.
- There is an increasing tendency in public debate to see the views of people with religious beliefs dismissed, despite the fact that the great majority of Australians have a religious belief. This sometimes extends to attempts to exclude people of faith from the public square.
- Religious views are often dismissed as belief systems that should be kept to yourself. Atheism and agnosticism are both belief systems. They are not neutral either.

### The necessity of engagement

- A change in the marriage law has consequences for every Australian, not just those who are same-sex attracted, so it is important that all of us are engaged in this discussion.
- It is not only our right, but our duty, to make our voices heard in this postal vote. You need to vote and you need to encourage family members, friends and neighbours to vote. Help them to understand the consequences of redefining marriage.