

“every child has a right to receive love from a mother and a father”.

Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* 172



Photo © Mattias Laethen/news.org.au

Pope Francis, Marriage and the Plebiscite

Marriage postal plebiscite

Australians are being asked to vote in the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey (plebiscite) to determine whether the legal definition of marriage should be changed to include same-sex unions. Ballot papers will be sent out from Tuesday, 12 September and all votes must be received back by Tuesday, 7 November 2017.

This brochure provides an overview of Pope Francis' teaching on marriage and the family for you to reflect upon. Please consider voting to keep marriage as a unique relationship between a woman and a man.

Woman and Man

Pope Francis grounds his teaching on marriage and the family in “the Book of Genesis, when God completes his work of creation and makes his masterpiece; the masterpiece is man and woman.”¹ 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. The difference between man and woman is not meant to stand in opposition, or to subordinate, but is for the sake of communion and generation, always in the image and likeness of God.”²

A unique union of man and woman

Pope Francis views “marriage as a unique, natural, fundamental and beautiful good for people, families, communities and societies.”³ 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.”⁴

Motherhood and fatherhood

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.”⁵ 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.”⁶

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.”⁷

Respect for every person

Pope Francis has highlighted that “every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while every sign of unjust discrimination is to be carefully avoided.”⁸ However, he has also pointed out that “there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family.”⁹

Advocate for Marriage

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.”¹⁰

These thoughts from Pope Francis should give us a reason to pray and reflect on what is at stake in the postal plebiscite in terms of the consequences of redefining marriage for our community.



Freedom of conscience has been challenged in countries where marriage has been redefined.

Consequences of redefining marriage

Limiting freedom of speech

Anti-discrimination laws will be used to further limit what can be said on marriage. Hobart Archbishop Julian Porteous was brought before the Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commission for distributing a letter about Catholic teaching on marriage.

Limiting freedom in the workplace

The drive for genderless marriage is associated with intolerance to opposition. For example, a Melbourne IT specialist was sacked after he told his colleagues that he did not want his children exposed to the Safe Schools program, which teaches gender fluidity. His employer accused him of "creating an unsafe work environment."¹¹

Limiting freedom of conscience

In countries where marriage has been redefined, examples abound of wedding service providers who have been sued or fined for declining to participate in same-sex wedding ceremonies.

Mandatory "Safe Schools" sex education

Radical sex education programs have been imposed on faith based schools in Canada since marriage was redefined in 2005.¹² Parents have been prevented from removing children from these programs.¹³

Erasing the legal 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.¹⁴

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".¹⁵

Closing of "non-compliant" schools

In the UK, Vishnitz Girls School, is facing closure for refusing to teach primary school girls about sexual orientation and gender re-assignment.¹⁶

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

1. Pope Francis, General Audience, 29 /4/15. 2. Pope Francis, General Audience, 15/4/15. 3. Pope Francis, Address to the International Colloquium on the Complementarity between Man and Woman, 7/11/14. 4. *Amoris Laetitia* 131. 5. *Amoris Laetitia* 172. 6. *Amoris Laetitia* 172. 7. *Amoris Laetitia* 52. 8. *Amoris Laetitia* 250. 9. *Amoris Laetitia* 251. 10. *Amoris Laetitia* 35. 11. *Christians under siege, religious freedom inquiry hears*, The Australian, Rebecca Urban, 6/5/17. 12. <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/ontario-liberals-to-introduce-updated-version-of-sex-education-curriculum-pulled-in-2010-over-religious-objections>. 13. *Same-sex education ruling an 'attack on parents' rights'*, The Australian, Joe Kelly, 30/11/16. 14. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-action-to-promote-lgbt-equality>. 15. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2016/11/30/all-families-are-equal-act-bill-28-wynne_n_13326140.html. 16. <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>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Australia License. Please attribute this publication to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. This resource may be reproduced or photocopied in its entirety or in part. No copyright fee is payable.



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
Bishops Commission for Family, Youth and Life
GPO Box 368, Canberra, ACT, 2601 Australia
www.catholic.org.au/plebiscite

Authorised by J Stuparich, 63 Currong St, Braddon ACT 2612.