

**SAME SEX “MARRIAGE”
POLITICAL AND PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS
October 28, 2015**

IMPORTANT READING

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

From *A Map of Life* by Frank Sheed (1933):

“Very early in life, man becomes aware that he is living in a world of laws: ...he discovers that fire burns, that hunger weakens, that rain wets, that bodies fall toward the earth and not toward the sky, and so with a myriad other things. If he reflects at all upon these laws, he realizes that they are not of his choosing—in fact that, in many cases, they are the reverse of what he would have chosen—but that their power is in no way affected by his disapproval. There is no way in which he can get free of them. He can act as though they did not exist, in which case they damage or even destroy him. If he is a sane man, he may dislike them but he accepts them and does his best to live in accordance with them. In any case, there is no such thing as freedom from them, but only freedom within them. And freedom within them can be attained only by one who knows them. This knowing them is always a matter of

discovery and not invention; in other words, one finds out what they are, one cannot in any way make them to be.”

“The moral law is no more made by man, or dependent on the approval of man, or in any way escapable by man than the material law. Man can ignore the moral law as he can ignore the material law, but the result in both cases is his own diminution or destruction.”

From the Declaration of Independence:

“When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed....”

From Randy Barnett, Professor of Legal Theory at Georgetown University Law School, and Director of the Georgetown Center

for the Constitution, on the last sentence of this passage (from “What the Declaration of Independence Really Claimed,” in the Washington Post, July 4, 2015):

“The Declaration identifies the ultimate end or purpose of republican governments as securing the pre-existing natural rights that the previous sentence affirmed is the measure against which all government--whether Great Britain or the United States--will be judged.... Read carefully, one sees that the Declaration speaks of ‘just powers,’ suggesting that only some powers are ‘justly’ held by government, while others are beyond its proper authority.... The Declaration stipulates that those who govern the people are to ‘secure’ their pre-existing rights....”

“First come rights, and then comes government. According to this view: The rights of individuals do not originate with any government, but pre-exist its formation. The protection of these rights is both the purpose and first duty of government.”

In reference to marriage specifically, Frank Sheed wrote the following:

“One hears the phrase that the modern man is no longer to be bound by the two-thousand-year-old law of marriage. It is as though one were to say that it was beneath the dignity of modern man to be bound by the even older law of gravity. For the question is not whether the law is old, but whether it is a

law. A man might very well say that he would not be bound by the law of gravity, yet he would be well advised to keep his affirmation within the sphere of words. Let him push it to act, and he will no longer be a modern man but a corpse, part of that history that, in his newness, he so heartily despises.”

From “Love is Our Mission” (The catechesis for the 2015 World Meeting of Families):

139. Debates about redefining marriage, including questions of same-sex marriage, raise legal and political questions. [The family is] a pre-political institution. To put it another way, the family is legally antecedent to civil society, the community, and the political state, since the family is founded more immediately in nature. Society does not invent or found the family; rather, the family is the foundation of society: The family, in which the various generations come together and help one another grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements of social life, is the very foundation of society. Public authority thus has a duty to protect and serve the family.

140. ...Today, the state purports more and more to invent marriage and redefine it at will. Allegedly, the family no longer builds society and the state; rather, the state now presumes to supervise and license the family.

141. Some legislators are now trying to codify this philosophic reversal in new marriage laws. Instead of receiving marriage

as an institution founded on nature, the new perspective regards marriage as infinitely plastic, as subordinate and malleable to political will.

142. A society that mistakenly thinks marriage is always renegotiable, accountable only to self-referential human consent, will see marriage essentially as a contract, as a voluntary agreement between autonomous bearers of individual rights. But these mere contracts are not the same as a marriage founded on a covenant of mercy.

145. When the true nature of marriage is undermined or poorly understood, the family is weakened. When the family is weak, we are all prone to a type of brutal individualism.... When the family is strong — when the family creates space for husbands, wives, and their children to practice the art of self-giving...— then light enters a dark world. In this light, the true nature of humanity can be seen.

PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Re-visiting Isaiah 55

“All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk.” (1)

“Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy? Heed ME, and you shall eat well, you

shall delight in rich fare. Come to ME heedfully, listen, that you may have life.” (2-3)

“Seek the Lord while he may be found, call him while he is near.... Turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous and forgiving.” (6-7)

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.” (8-9)

From “Love Is Our Mission” Chapter Eight: A Home For The Wounded Heart:

147. Greeting the Holy Family in the Temple, Simeon declares that the child Jesus is destined “to be a sign that will be contradicted.” (Lk 2:34, NAB) The Gospels prove the truth of these words in the reaction to Jesus’ ministry by his contemporaries. Jesus offends even many of his own followers. One reason is the “hard sayings” found in his words....

Some of Christ’s hardest sayings deal with marriage, sexual desire, and the family.

150. The Church continues the mission of Jesus in the world. “Whoever listens to you, listens to me,” Jesus tells the disciples whom he sends out in his name. (Lk 10:16) The

bishops, in communion with the Holy Father, succeed the apostles in their ministry. Thus it should surprise no one that some Church teachings are also perceived as “hard sayings,” out of step with current culture, especially on marriage, sexual expression, and the family.

151. To grasp the Church’s ministry of teaching correctly, we also need to consider her pastoral nature. Pope Francis once famously likened the Church to “a field hospital after battle.” He said: “It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds.... And you have to start from the ground up.”

152. Sexuality is uniquely vulnerable to such wounds.

“LAW OF GRADUALNESS” VS. “GRADUALNESS OF THE LAW”

163. The question is not whether to change the doctrine, but to go deeper and make sure that pastoral care takes account of situations and of what each person is able to do.

164. Many of Christ’s moral teachings, and thus Catholic ethics, are demanding. But they presume in Christians a spirit of discipleship, a life of prayer, and a commitment to social and economic Christian witness. Above all, they presuppose life in a Christian *community* — i.e., a family of other men and women who have encountered Jesus, who together confess

that he is Lord, wanting his grace to shape their lives, and helping each other respond to him.

165. Catholic teaching on homosexuality must be understood in that light. The same teaching that calls same-sex-attracted persons to lives of chastity in the form of continence calls *all* Catholics to abandon their own fears, to shun unjust discrimination, and to welcome their homosexual brothers and sisters to the communion of love and truth within the Church. *All* Christians are called to face their disordered sexual inclinations and to grow in chastity — not a single human individual is untouched by this summons — and hence in their capacity to give and receive love in a manner consonant with their state in life. Yet the response to this summons to conversion is inevitably a work in progress on the part of we recovering sinners who make up the Church's members. The key is to create within the family, the parish, and the wider Christian community an environment of mutual support where moral growth and change can occur.

From Chapter Six: All Love Bears Fruit:

101. In any society, many will be marginalized if marriage is seen as mandatory, as if one needs a romantic partner in order to be complete. Celibacy in the Church rebels against this misleading idea.

102. Because everyone is called to give and receive love, because Christian love is outward looking, celibacy is a

communal practice. When we love one another chastely outside of marriage, the fruit is friendship.

110. Authentic celibacy is always richly social, and if celibacy is seen as uniquely lonely or alienated, then something in the practice or structure of community has gone awry.

112. Celibacy is not sterile, nor is it “single” in the sense of isolated or autonomous. In the Church, we are all interdependent, created for communion, created to give and receive love.

Back to Chapter Eight:

166. Some of today’s urgency to approve or give legal status to same sex and opposite sex cohabitation comes from an understandable fear of loneliness. More and more in secular mainstream culture, having an erotic partner is perceived to be a necessity, and people think Church teaching is cruel, dooming men and women to a life of loneliness.

167. But if ordinary parishioners understood the rationale behind celibacy as a community practice, and if more domestic churches took the apostolate of hospitality more seriously, then the ancient Catholic teaching on chastity lived in continence outside of marriage might look more plausible to modern eyes. In other words, if our parishes really were places where “single” did not mean “lonely,” where extended networks of friends and families really did share one another’s

joys and sorrows, then perhaps at least some of the world's objections to Catholic teaching might be disarmed. Catholics can embrace apostolates of hospitality no matter how hostile or indifferent the surrounding culture might be. Nobody is limiting lay or ordained Catholics in the friendship which we can offer those who struggle.