

CATHOLICS FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY

GOD IS LOVE

Maine Marriage Initiative: What the Bishop Said in Our Parish Bulletins

Common Arguments of Proponents

The Maine Marriage Initiative Website has a detailed section on the rights same-sex couples are seeking, and the truth about them. In fact, same-sex couples ALREADY have many of the rights of married couples under Maine's Domestic Partnership laws. Under Maine law, same-sex partners have rights to hospital visitation and can take advantage of rights of inheritance, simply by making out a will. Some of the rights being sought by same-sex couples are in fact controlled by Federal law, not state law, and changing the definition of marriage in Maine won't change anything simply because Federal law trumps state law. The handful of rights still not covered can easily be addressed by the legislature without taking the drastic step of changing the definition of marriage. Advocates of gay marriage believe that being legally married will grant them respect. Respect is something that each of us earns as individuals, and it's based on our values and our behavior – not our marital status or our gender orientation. Some advocates of same-sex marriage claim that current laws make same-sex couples analogous to victims of racism. This argument is off-base for a variety of reasons, including: Racism is based upon appearance. Racism is rooted in the belief that one race is physically and intellectually superior to another. No one is making that argument against gays and lesbians. Racism seeks to make others subservient. No one is trying to make gays and lesbians subservient, and the Church believes that gays and lesbians deserve as much respect as heterosexuals.

Catholics for Marriage Equality: What We Know

Compassion and Caring Inspire Proponents: There are no legal documents or separate systems that provide all of the same automatic legal protections or responsibilities as marriage.

In November John's long-time partner died in his arms of complications from Alzheimer's. They were registered domestic partners. When the undertaker arrived to transport Craik's body for cremation, she asked, "Where are his children?" Staff at the care-facility intervened saying: "His sons don't live close. John is his partner and has slept here several nights since Craik's admission over two months ago." The undertaker responded, "We do not know that John has the right to determine disposition of this body. We will not act without his adult sons." Both sons had to sign the cremation order; one by fax from California. Ignored as his beloved's life-partner, John wept anew.

This is what gay and lesbian couples mean when they ask for "respect." Their behavior is not at issue. *It is the refusal of those in positions of authority to honor even the "handful" of Maine laws that is at issue.* Interviewed later, a spokesperson for the funeral industry said, "Even when straight people have different last names, we feel safer in assuming they are married if they so assert. With gay people, we cannot assume their authority to make decisions. We cannot risk being sued." [Maine Statutes provide domestic partners this often ignored right].

The bishop is correct: 1,138 rights are controlled by the federal government that marriage equality in Maine will not secure. The bishop is wrong that the 400+ rights controlled by the State are readily obtained through private (and costly) means or easily changed by the legislature. As John's story illustrates, the bishop is also correct that the designation "marriage" stands alone in social and historical significance. That is why Catholics must honor Jesus' call for justice for the marginalized and vote to uphold civil marriage for same-sex couples. For more information please visit: www.religiouscoalition.org.

