

PAX CHRISTI MAINE COUNCIL STATEMENT ON THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE LEGISLATION REPEAL CAMPAIGN

Pax Christi Maine's interest in the present controversy over same-sex marriage legislation is that the proposed denial of legitimate human rights does violence to those denied. Pax Christi Maine stands against all violence against human dignity.

We find the hierarchy's dismissal of same sex orientation as "disordered" to be demeaning and woefully inadequate, covering lack of difficult understanding with a neat judgmental category. The Church has yet to develop an adequate theology for gays, lesbians, and the transgendered so should be extremely cautious in making moral pronouncements regarding those states. And too often church officials have failed to develop appropriate pastoral sensitivity and compassion in their regard. Actually, the Church needs to reconsider its whole understanding of sexuality.

We respect the Church's right to reserve the sacrament of marriage to heterosexual couples. But we challenge Bishop Malone's effort, with the so-called Christian right, to impose on all Maine citizens the Roman Catholic and Christian right reservation of marriage to heterosexual couples. Such an imposition would be contrary to necessary pluralistic accommodation in a democratic and diverse society.

Moreover, reservation of "marriage" to heterosexual couples would apparently deny same sex couples significant rights heterosexual couples enjoy, as Bishop Malone, who has supported such rights in recent years acknowledges. It is argued that estate benefits, gift tax benefits, death tax benefits, estate planning benefits, Social Security benefits, disability benefits, employment benefits, medical benefits, death benefits, family benefits, housing benefits, consumer benefits, immigration rights, adoption rights, and other rights and privileges that accompany a marriage certificate would all be denied or affected. Apart from the wrong of imposing our church's view of marriage on all, the price of repeal of Maine same sex marriage legislation in denial of such rights is unacceptable to us as Catholics committed to justice and as American citizens. Certainly, Benedict XVI notwithstanding, there is no moral obligation to oppose legalization of same gender marriage.

We are also disturbed by campaign claims that the legislation would afford new rights, rights already enjoyed by same sex couples, and such fabrications as the claim by campaign leader Mark Mutty that it would oblige schools to teach homosexuality.

Given Bishop Malone's departure from appropriate respect for a plurality of moral views and readiness to deny same sex couples legal rights they should enjoy, we consider it inappropriate that he should use the Sunday Eucharist, when the Christian community is united in worship and mutual love, to propagandize for imposing our church's view of marriage on others, to deny same sex couples important rights enjoyed by heterosexual couples, and to collect funds to deny community members and others important rights. Far better were diocesan leadership to sponsor open discussions on the sacramental meaning of marriage, on how pluralism works, and on the importance of all affirming the equal rights of all.

Pax Christi Maine is the Catholic and ecumenical peace and social justice movement in Maine, a region of Pax Christi USA. It has over 200 members, including several who are members of other Christian churches or none and has had a Jewish member. It networks extensively with other peace and social justice organizations. Denise Dreher is Council chair, Bill Slavick coordinator. Address: 242 Ludlow Street, Portland, ME 04102. William.slavick@maine.edu Phone 207-773-6562.