

CATHOLICS FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY

GOD IS LOVE

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

Religious Conscience Protections (part one)

"The idea that marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman is a core religious belief for significant numbers of Americans. But the freedom to express this and other beliefs about marriage, family, and sexual values will come under growing pressure as courts, public officials, and private institutions come to regard the traditional understanding of marriage as a form of irrational prejudice that should be purged from public life." Without adequate religious conscience protections—many religious organizations and individuals will be forced to engage in conduct that violates their deepest religious beliefs, and religious organizations would be limited in crucial aspects of their religious exercise. Because Maine's newly enacted law does not provide full conscience protection, individuals and religious groups, particularly those that provide social and educational services, would be subject to civil harassment in the form of lawsuits. Wide-ranging conflicts recognized by legal scholars: In the only comprehensive scholarly work on same-sex marriage and religious liberty to date, legal scholars on both sides of the same-sex marriage debate agreed that codifying same-sex marriage *without* providing robust religious accommodations will create widespread and unnecessary legal conflict—conflict that will work a “sea change in American law” and will “reverberate across the legal and religious landscape.” Likely lawsuits include claims that: A religious college that offers special housing for married students can be sued under housing discrimination laws for offering that housing to opposite-sex, but not same-sex, married couples. Religious individuals who run a business, such as wedding photographers, florists, banquet halls, or bed and breakfasts, can be sued under public accommodations laws for refusing to offer their services in connection with a same-sex marriage ceremony. Religious camps, day cares, retreat centers, counseling centers, or adoption agencies can be sued under public accommodations laws for refusing to offer their services to members of a same-sex marriage.

Catholics for Marriage Equality: What We Know

Religious Conscience Protections for All Maine's Citizens (part one)

- Marriage equality has no effect on existing Human Rights Act protections. Discrimination by any business or person in housing, employment, credit, and public accommodations based on sexual orientation is illegal regardless of marriage rights for same-sex couples.
- The Bishop is entitled to his doctrinal objections to any marriage. He retains authority under the law to prohibit weddings in Catholic churches and to deny church recognition to any marriage, including same-sex couples.
- Maine's new marriage equality law expands religious conscience protections to clergy and members of *other* religious traditions that *affirm* and recognize rights of same-sex couples to be married by the state and within their faith communities.
- Change can be terrifying. For people of faith, the terror is mitigated by the knowledge of the Presence of a loving Holy Spirit Who moves among us in mysterious ways – causing us to view our neighbor, including our gay and lesbian neighbor, with compassion and seek justice for those traditionally excluded from civil rights.
- The Bishop's concerns reflect distrust of human rights laws: laws in effect in Maine since 2005, laws whose passage the Diocese of Portland wisely supported.

For more information, please visit: www.religiouscoalition.org

