



The Catholic Women's League of Canada Position Paper

TITLE: Matrimony and Same-sex Unions

POSITION STATEMENT

The Catholic Women's League of Canada is committed to recognizing the bond of marriage as a matrimonial covenant between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others and for showing respect and love for the dignity of partners in same-sex unions, their families and their children.

- The League is committed to strengthening and protecting matrimony as an institution fundamental to the growth and prosperity of civilization and maintains that marriage be defined in Canadian law as between one woman and man to the exclusion of all others.

BACKGROUND

Marriage in the Catholic church is a sacrament. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines the sacrament of matrimony as, "The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament" (1601).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, state that every person is to be respected in their dignity and treated with respect, love and compassion and that homosexual persons must be accepted with dignity, respect, compassion, consideration and sensitivity (Francis 250; Vatican 2358).

The *Responsum of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* states that individuals who identify as homosexual may receive a blessing but that the blessing of homosexual unions cannot be considered licit as this would "constitute a certain imitation or analogue of the nuptial blessing invoked on the man and woman united in the sacrament of matrimony."

Further, the document *Fiducia Supplicans on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings* states, "...a blessing may be imparted... upon those who... do not claim a legitimation of their own status, but who beg that all that is true, good, and humanly valid in their lives and their relationships be enriched, healed, and elevated by the presence of the Holy Spirit. These forms of blessing express a supplication that God may grant those aids that come from the impulses of his Spirit...so that human relationships may mature and grow in fidelity to the Gospel, that they may be freed from their imperfections and frailties, and that they may express themselves in the ever-increasing dimension of the divine love" (Fernandez para.31).

Through *The Civil Marriage Act* (formerly Bill C-38), the federal government defines civil marriage as "the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others," thus extending civil marriage to conjugal couples of the same sex." The act confirms the right to freedom of religion and asserts that religious groups are free not to perform marriages that are not in accordance with their religious beliefs (Hurley).

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS

- Be knowledgeable and supportive of the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching on matrimony and same-sex unions.
- Advocate for and take action to strengthen and protect matrimony as an institution fundamental to the growth and prosperity of civilization.
- Advocate for the natural human rights and dignity of all persons.
- Monitor and act upon federal and provincial legislation to protect religious freedom and church teaching on marriage, including the definition of same-sex unions as civil unions.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

“Responsum of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to a Dubium Regarding the Blessing of the Unions of Persons of the Same Sex.” press.vatican.va, www.press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/03/15/210315b.html.

Fernandez, Víctor Manuel. *Declaration Fiducia Supplicans on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings*, Vatican.va, 18 Dec. 2023, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dff_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_en.html.

Francis. “Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia of the Holy Father Francis.” *The Holy See*, Vatican Press, 19 Mar. 2016, www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

Hurley, Mary C. “Legislative Summary for Bill C-38: Civil Marriage Act.” *Library of Parliament*, 2 Feb. 2005, lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/LegislativeSummaries/381LS502E#:~:text=Bill%20C-38%20defines%20civil,11%20May%20through%2014%20Jun.

Spence, Francis J. “Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons.” *Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops*, 4 May 2021, www.cccb.ca/letter/submission-to-the-house-of-commons-standing-committee-on-human-rights-and-the-status-of-disabled-persons-by-the-canadian-conference-of-catholic-bishops/.

Vatican. “Catechism of the Catholic Church: Article 7 The Sacrament of Matrimony,” *The Holy See*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 4 Nov 2003, www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/P50.HTM.

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