



***“God created man in the image of himself,
in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them”***

(Genesis 1, 27)

**A Pastoral Letter to the Clergy, Religious and Faithful of the
Diocese of Paisley**

**In Defence of Marriage -
A response to the Scottish Government Consultation
on Same Sex Marriage**

Right Rev. Philip Tartaglia, PhB, STD.

Bishop of Paisley

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Scottish Government has launched a consultation in which they propose that same sex marriage should be introduced in Scotland.

The Catholic Bishops of Scotland have expressed their unanimous opposition to this proposal. I have made public my own submission to the Scottish Government. You can read it on the website of the Diocese of Paisley at www.rcdop.org.uk

I have also given radio and television interviews in which I have defended the institution of marriage as uniquely the union of a man and a woman, and stressed the foolishness of the Government's proposal to re-define marriage to accommodate same sex unions.

I now ask you to respond individually to the Government Consultation and say that you are against the introduction of same sex marriage.

Same Sex Marriage is wrong in principle

Nature, reason and religion concur that marriage is uniquely the union of a man and a woman, which, by its very nature, is designed for the mutual good of the spouses and to give the children who may be born of that union a father and a mother.

For obvious reasons, a same sex union cannot do that. A same sex union should not therefore be called marriage. Same sex unions are different in nature and purpose from marriage. Same sex marriage is therefore not an issue about equality or human rights. It is an issue about the nature and meaning of marriage in our society.

It is very important to realise that opposition to the introduction of same sex marriage is not, as some so stridently assert, 'homophobic bigotry', but is the assertion and defence of the nature and meaning of marriage which has been universally recognised by all cultures and all the great religions, and which has sustained humanity since time immemorial. It is therefore wrong and foolish to undermine this understanding of marriage.

Same Sex Marriage is unnecessary

The State recognises same sex unions in the form of civil partnerships. In law, same sex partners have all the rights and privileges of marriage, except the right to be called a marriage. Same sex marriage is therefore unnecessary. Moreover, to call a civil partnership a marriage is to play a childish but dangerous game with language, in which people make something mean whatever they want it to mean.

Same Sex Marriage will have undesirable consequences

1. Same sex marriage will change the nature of parenting. The normal mother and father model of parenting will be replaced in law and then gradually in culture by a non gender-specific model of parenting which will deprive children of their right to have a mother and a father, and which will have negative implications for the sexual identity of children, creating in the long run a society in which more and more people will not be able to identify their sexuality, something which will further damage marriage and family, and be to the detriment of the common good.
2. The introduction of same sex marriage into law will have detrimental effects on education. The new models of sex education, of marriage and of parenting will certainly become mandatory in public schools. While Catholic schools in Scotland have autonomy in religious education programmes, the ideological and bureaucratic pressure on teachers and schools to conform to the new coercive orthodoxy could become unbearable, creating a climate of confusion, mistrust and fear in education and in schools, as teachers and educators are cajoled and bullied into teaching what is contrary to faith, reason and common sense.
3. Once the definition of marriage is changed to accommodate same sex unions on account of equality and human rights, Government will have no good reasons not to extend the definition of marriage to other combinations, such as three or more partner marriages. The problem will be that Government will not be able to give a principled answer to requests for polygamous marriage. It will not be able to say, "This is not allowed because it is not right". It can only say, "This is not allowed because it's not allowed", and this is clearly unsatisfactory and ultimately unsustainable.
4. The redefinition of marriage to include same sex unions will bring with it State-sponsored discrimination and penalties in the courts and in the workplace against anyone who dares to question the rightness of same sex marriage, thereby riding roughshod over freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom of conscience.

Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages in Church

The Government's assurance that it will not require religious bodies to register civil partnerships or conduct same sex marriages is disingenuous. The Government could not require the Catholic Church under any circumstances to conduct civil partnerships or same sex marriages. In a democracy, any such attempt would be a serious infringement of religious liberty. So as far as the Catholic Church is concerned, this assurance is worth nothing. It is a complete red herring.

However, what the Government's assurance may do is to create the expectation that religious bodies will register civil partnerships and conduct same sex marriages, thereby heaping pressure on religious bodies which are uncertain which way to go and sowing the seeds of dissent and disunity among Church memberships. It would have been much wiser for the Government not to have attempted to interfere in the legitimate freedom and self-regulation of religious bodies.

Conclusion

The Government Consultation remains open until 9th December 2011. Please contribute to the consultation and tell the Government that you do not want same sex marriage to be introduced in Scotland because it is wrong in principle, it is unnecessary in practice and will have damaging consequences for the common good.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

✘ Philip Tartaglia, Bishop of Paisley

Notes

You can respond to the Government consultation in two ways:

1. By filling out the postcard from the Catholic Parliamentary Office, which will be delivered soon to your parish.
2. By accessing the on-line response form on same sex marriage at the Scottish Government website:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/09/05153328/0>

You can email your completed response to familylaw@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or you can print it off and send it by post to Sandra Jack, Scottish Government, St. Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG.