



## A Pastoral Message for Homosexual Catholics in the Archdiocese of Washington

Recent legislative efforts in the District of Columbia to redefine marriage have brought a number of issues to the forefront. Consistent with the Catholic Church's teachings on marriage and human sexuality, the Archdiocese of Washington has shared its concerns, while also continuing to speak about the meaning of marriage.

Of the many teachings of the Catholic Church, perhaps some of the most challenging for Catholics in today's culture involve human sexuality, including homosexuality. Modern cultural pressures and assumptions often are at odds with the teachings of Christ handed down throughout the centuries. For some parishioners, the issues are deeply personal. Living out the Church's teachings can be a difficult challenge. Yet, no one needs to do this separated from the grace and love of the Church.

It is important to affirm that the Catholic Church is and always will be welcoming of any person who seeks a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. *Always Our Children*, a document of the United States bishops regarding homosexuality, reiterates this. Our support of marriage is not meant to discriminate against any individual or family. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* upholds the human dignity of every person and condemns any form of unjust discrimination (2358).

The archdiocese's efforts to affirm marriage and oppose legislative efforts to redefine it flow from the understanding of the nature of marriage and its purpose. Scripture also confirms this reality when it tells us that the union of man and woman coming together to form a communion of mutual support and an openness to creating new life is at the core of God's plan: "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." (Gen 2:18) In the New Testament, Jesus recalls, "God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh." (Mk 10:6-8)

The complementarity of man and woman is the foundation of marriage as created by God. The Church and, indeed, cultures throughout time have recognized that marriage is the faithful union of man and woman, joined in a permanent relationship of self-giving love and an openness to creating new life.

For our parishioners who are homosexual, I recognize that the teaching on marriage established by our Lord may be difficult. Please know that you have my pastoral care and prayers, and the support of this local Church, as you live out your journey of faith and seek a closer relationship with Christ and the eternal life promised to us through him. It is my prayer that you continue to draw closer to the Lord through participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

May all of us remember that the message of Christ is always one of hope, peace and love.

Archbishop of Washington

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