

Month Five 2011 Bulletin Announcements Religious Liberty

WEEK ONE



Marriage Matters: What is religious liberty?

Religious liberty is the “right to live the truth of one’s faith and in conformity with one’s transcendent dignity as a person.” According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 2106), “Nobody may be forced to act against his convictions, nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in association with others, within due limits.” Religious liberty is so important that Blessed John Paul II called it the “source and synthesis” of rights considered basic to every human person. (*USCCB.org, Marriage: Unique for a Reason*)

For more information, visit: <http://www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/marriage-and-family/> and Facebook.



Marriage Matters: How are marriage and religious liberty connected?

Marriage (the union of one man and one woman as husband and wife) and religious liberty are two distinct goods that are also related to each other. The protection of each good follows from the duty to protect the inviolable dignity of the human person. But even more directly, the legal protection of marriage as the union of one man and one woman also protects the religious freedom of those who adhere to that vision of marriage. (*USCCB.org, Marriage: Unique for a Reason*)

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Marriage Matters: How could changing the legal definition of marriage have any effect on religious liberty?

Changing the legal term “marriage” is not one change in the law, but rather amounts to thousands of changes at once. The term “marriage” can be found in family law, employment law, trusts and estates, healthcare law, tax law, property law, and many others. These laws affect and pervasively regulate religious institutions, such as churches, religiously-affiliated schools, hospitals, and families. When Church and State agree on what the legal term “marriage” means (the union of one man and one woman), there is harmony between the law and religious institutions. When Church and State disagree on what the term “marriage” means (e.g., if the State redefines marriage), conflict results on a massive scale between the law and religious institutions and families, as the State will apply various sanctions against the Church for its refusal to comply with the State’s definition. Religious liberty is then threatened. (*USCCB.org, Marriage: Unique for a Reason*)

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Marriage Matters: Would ministers really be forced to officiate at the “wedding” of two persons of the same-sex?

The question is a red herring. In other words, it is a false caricature of the real concerns about religious liberty, and is actually used to distract from the real concerns. It is unlikely in the extreme that the State will force ministers and churches to officiate same-sex “marriage” ceremonies, although it is easily foreseeable that many church ministers and communities could be sued in court over this question. There are, however, other more probable and pervasive concerns. (*USCCB.org, Marriage: Unique for a Reason*)

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