

The (Dis)Respect for Marriage Act

Marriage has a definition founded on the natural order. It is not an institution that can be redefined at the whim of judges or legislators or to appease social activist groups. It is the lifelong exclusive union of one man and one woman. Just repeating this age-old simple truth today highlights how far from the natural moral law we have strayed in the modern world. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* further states:

The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws. God himself is the author of marriage. The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. (CCC 1603)

President Joe Biden signed into federal law this week the extraordinarily mis-named “Respect for Marriage Act” which codifies “homosexual marriage”. This is one more in a chain of scandalous actions by Biden who presents himself as a faithful Catholic while at the same time doing everything in his power to promote abortion rights and the radical LGBTQ agenda. It is simply impossible to be a good Catholic when one rejects such basic moral teachings of the Church, just as it would be incompatible with claiming to be a fervent environmentalist if one endorsed massively polluting projects. The legislation was passed in a crafty way using the “lame duck” congressional session before the Democrats lose their majority in the US House of Representatives as a result of this past November’s elections. Sadly, quite a few Republicans voted for the bill in the Senate, allowing it to overcome the filibuster and go to President Biden’s desk for his signature.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee for Religious Liberty, issued a protest [statement](#) pointing out how there is a real danger of persecution for people and institutions who believe in the natural law definition of marriage. We all have heard of the unacceptable and protracted legal battles of bake shops and other businesses that would not violate their religious beliefs and were sued for refusing to make special cakes or otherwise endorse “same-sex weddings.” Usually, these cases have had good resolutions with resounding higher court victories, but it is a strategy of LGBTQ pressure groups to use lawsuits as an intimidation technique. They want people and businesses to give in to their unreasonable demands out of fear that they will be dragged through the mud in the liberal media and forced to defend themselves in court for years on end.

Many are calling this the “disrespect for marriage act.” Its origin was the fear some liberals experienced when the US Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* with the *Dobbs* ruling earlier this year. They reasoned that the Supreme Court's *Obergefell* ruling, which established a fictitious constitutional right to “same-sex marriage”, might be vulnerable to reversal as well. The crafters of the bill also raised a ludicrous justification by adding language guaranteeing the right to racially mixed marriages. This may have been calculated as a swipe at one of their chief detractors, Justice Clarence Thomas, who is African-American and married to a Caucasian wife. Cardinal Dolan [pointed out](#) that: “The bill will be a new arrow in the quiver of those who wish

to deny religious organizations' liberty to freely exercise their religious duties, strip them of their tax exemptions, or exclude them from full participation in the public arena."

Many liberal institutions and legislators are increasingly intolerant of the rights of those who disagree with them. Some have even discarded what used to be a central pillar of progressive thinking, that freedom of speech and of the press should not be denied, even if what is being said is unpopular. It is a hallmark of totalitarian ideologies that they brook no dissent or even discussion or debate but impose their beliefs by crushing any opposition. The Catholic approach to truth and orthodoxy is to urge people to accept the teachings of the Church but not to impose them by force. Abuses by some Catholic persons in attempting to coerce people to be baptized and accept the faith in the past have been condemned by the Church.

Maintaining the truth about marriage is crucially important because the family, the most fundamental social unit that undergirds civilized society, is built on marriage. Marriage has been undermined for decades by such negative factors as easy divorce and frequent cohabitation by unmarried persons. I believe this has fueled the current crisis of the family in the United States and elsewhere. Children thrive best when raised by married parents who go to church. These and other statements affirming the Catholic and natural law perspective are strongly supported by the findings of social science. I recommend people go to the [Marriage and Religion Research Initiative](#) (MARRI) created and run by my good friend Dr. Pat Fagan to get the evidence and information they need to convince others that our view of marriage is correct. MARRI has brought together a mountain of scientific information that speaks for itself "on the impact of marriage and religious practice on the lives of adults and children, and on the future of the nation."

The contemporary social experiments involving same-sex couples and other non-traditional arrangements have no chance of being as successful as sacramental marriages since they are in contradiction to the natural moral law. It is impossible to build a solid house without a firm foundation, and strong happy families are built on the foundation of a faithful marriage between a husband and wife who support each other in following God's plan for their lives. Changing definitions and laws cannot change reality, but can induce many into error. It simply makes it more difficult for people to see the truth when fundamentally different social living arrangements are all called "marriages" by the civil authorities.