



THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER

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The Archdiocese of Philadelphia won an important religious liberty case in [Fulton v. City of Philadelphia](#). The US Supreme Court (SCOTUS) ruled unanimously against the requirement that Catholic Social Services place foster children with same-sex couples. For over fifty years the Catholic Church provided foster services for children in need of parents and adoption. The Archdiocese stood up to the unethical mandate on the grounds that it would force them to endorse a view of marriage and sexuality that contradicts perennial Judeo-Christian and natural law teachings. This was yet another example of radicals trying to coerce others to collaborate with their agenda, this time at the expense of the best interests of children.

Having nine Justices vote in unanimity against this injustice is a stinging rebuke of liberal activism. Even the most left-leaning Supreme Court members saw clearly that the City of Philadelphia had the power to grant an exemption and refused solely to punish the Catholic Church. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional right to religious liberty with no dissenters. Self-identifying progressives will now have to admit that their chances of winning these types of religious liberty cases is severely diminished. Their arbitrary and unjust actions will be challenged in the courts. The argument that churches and individuals are discriminating “under the guise of religious freedom” is clearly not a promising line of thought before the Supreme Court. Appeals court judges, who should be embarrassed when their decisions are unanimously reversed by SCOTUS, will be paying attention.

Ethical standards exclude forcing others to violate their well-formed conscientious beliefs. We can and should advocate for our beliefs, and even try to convert others to our way of thinking, but without any form of coercion. Cancel culture, however, makes it unacceptable to hold views that are not politically correct. The activists are no longer satisfied with the moral relativist’s view that many different opinions on a given topic are acceptable. Their present agenda is to impose an ideology on others by force, despite our constitutional rights. The great irony of the present cultural temptation is that it is championed by the same groups that were once strong defenders of moral relativism. There seems to be greater consensus now that it is illogical to claim that completely incompatible things can be true at the same time.

Modern liberals, however, are still relativists in important ways. The future Pope Benedict XVI was quite prophetic when he denounced the [dictatorship of relativism](#) in his homily at the Mass before the conclave that would soon elect him. We see that he was right. Although everyone must tow the party line concerning what is politically in vogue or else, the content of “liberal truth” is constantly changing. At one point many said race did not exist and was only an artificial construct. Now, one has the impression that everything revolves around race, as if it were the most fundamental aspect of society. Do you know that racism is now presented as one of the most serious [public health](#) problems in America? Gender is another area that is in constant flux. Whether persons have genetically determined identities or get to choose their own gender

depends on which way the opinion makers swing the pendulum. Today the view from which no one may dissent is that persons have complete freedom to choose who he/she/they is/are.

This is a transparent attempt to suppress truth. The human spirit has always resisted thought control. In his 1862 Address to Congress, Abraham Lincoln described America as the “last best hope for earth” because of our Constitution’s tradition of fostering greater liberty and reforms. The US kept us moving in the right direction as a society until the 1970s. With terrible decisions like Roe v. Wade, however, SCOTUS denied rights to entire categories of Americans rather than expanding freedom. Activist judges, legislating from the bench, issued one bad ruling after another. Now that conservative appointments have led to greater restraint on the Supreme Court, liberals are talking about “court packing” to ensure their dominance.

It is fundamental that religious liberty and conscience rights remain a legally binding feature of America. We must remain vigilant, but thankfully, it now seems the Supreme Court is once again developing a correct understanding of this issue. I am very proud to reside in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia where Catholic Social Services and foster parents had the courage to fight successfully all the way to the highest court in the land. I also congratulate the legal team at Becket for their stellar work in litigating this case.