



## Diocese of Springfield in Illinois

Catholic Pastoral Center • 161S West Washington Street • Springfield , Illinois 62702

www.dio.org

217-698-8500

FAX 217-698-0802

Office of the Bishop

### DECREE

#### REGARDING SAME-SEX "MARRIAGE" AND RELATED PASTORAL ISSUES

Whereas, it has been the clear and consistent teaching of the Catholic Church since her founding by Our Lord Jesus Christ that the Creator instituted marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman by which they establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, ordered equally toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children (cf. Mt 19:4-6; *Gaudiwn et Spes*, no. 48; and CIC, c. 1055). Jesus Christ himself affirmed the privileged place of marriage in human and Christian society by raising it to the dignity of a sacrament. Consequently, the Church has not only the authority, but the serious obligation, to affirm its authentic teaching on marriage and to preserve and foster the sacred value of the married state; and

Whereas, in a reversal of millennia of legal and judicial recognition of the marital union as possible only between one man and one woman, same-sex "marriage" is now recognized by legislative action and judicial decision as legal throughout the United States of America;

Therefore, given my responsibility as diocesan bishop to guide the people of God entrusted to me with charity but without compromising the truth, I, the Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki, by the grace of God and favor of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Springfield in Illinois, do hereby promulgate the following norms as diocesan policy with respect to same-sex marriage and related pastoral issues:

#### 1. The Solemnization and Blessing of Same-Sex Marriages

- a) No member of the clergy, or any other person while acting as an employee or representative of the Diocese, is to assist at or participate in the solemnization or blessing of same-sex marriages, including providing services, accommodations, advantages, facilities, goods or privileges for such events.
- b) No Catholic facility or property, including but not limited to parishes and schools, health and charitable institutions, benevolent orders or any place dedicated, consecrated or used for Catholic worship is to be used for the solemnization or blessing of same-sex marriages or the hosting of receptions for these events.

- c) In order to avoid any appearance of Catholic sanction by way of the use of items or symbols identified with Catholic worship, no items dedicated or blessed for use in Catholic worship, including but not limited to sacred vessels, vestments, or liturgical books, are to be used for the solemnization or blessing of same-sex marriages.

## 2. Reception of Holy Communion

- a) Given the objectively immoral nature of the relationship created by same-sex marriages, persons in such unions should not present themselves for Holy Communion, nor should they be admitted to Holy Communion (cc. 915-916).
- b) Pastors aware of such situations should address these concerns privately with the persons in such circumstances, calling them to conversion and advising them not to present themselves for Holy Communion until they have been restored to communion with the Church through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- c) In danger of death, a person living publically in a same-sex marriage may be given Holy Communion in the form of Viaticum if he or she expresses repentance for his or her sins (c. 921).

## 3. Sacraments of Initiation

- a) A child with a Catholic parent or parents living in a same-sex marriage may be baptized if there is a well-founded hope that he or she will be brought up in the Catholic faith (c. 868). The pastor should use due discretion in determining the appropriateness of the public celebration of the baptism.
- b) A child living with a Catholic parent or parents in a same-sex marriage, who is otherwise qualified and properly disposed, may receive First Eucharist and the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- c) A person living publically in a same-sex marriage is not to serve as a sponsor for the Sacraments of Baptism or Confirmation.
- d) A person living publically in a same-sex marriage is not to be admitted to the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) or receive the Sacrament of Confirmation unless he or she has withdrawn from the objectively immoral relationship.

3. Funeral Rites

- a) Unless they have given some signs of repentance before their death, deceased persons who had lived openly in a same-sex marriage giving public scandal to the faithful are to be deprived of ecclesiastical funeral rites. In case of doubt, the proper pastor or parochial administrator is to consult the local ordinary, whose judgment is to be followed (cf. c. 1184).

4. Participation in Liturgical Ministries

- a) Persons who are publically living in a same-sex marriage are not to serve in a public liturgical ministry, including but not limited to reader and extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

5. Catholic Schools and Catechetical and Formational Programs

- a) Children living with persons in a same-sex marriage are not to be denied admission to Catholic schools and catechetical and formational programs on those grounds alone. However, parents and those who legally take the place of parents are to be advised that their child(ren) will be instructed according to the Church's teachings on marriage and sexuality in their fullness and they must agree to abide by the Family School Agreement.

Finally, I remind all who exercise a ministry within the Church that while being clear and direct about what the Church teaches, our pastoral ministry must always be respectful, compassionate and sensitive to all our brothers and sisters in faith, as was the ministry of Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd and our everlasting model for ministry. They are also warned that culpable violation of any of these norms can be punished with a just penalty (cf. cc. 1315, 1339, 1347 and 1389).

Given at the Curia of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois , on this 12th day of June, in the Year of Our Lord 2017.



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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

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 Ecclesiastical Notary