

MARRIAGE

frequently asked questions

Why can marriage only be a union of a man and a woman?

Marriage means the unique community formed when a man and a woman give themselves to each other for life in an exclusive sexual relationship that is open to the gift of children. Marriage needs both a man and a woman because only a man and a woman can become 'one flesh' and in that intimacy conceive new life.

Isn't the right to marry a basic human right?

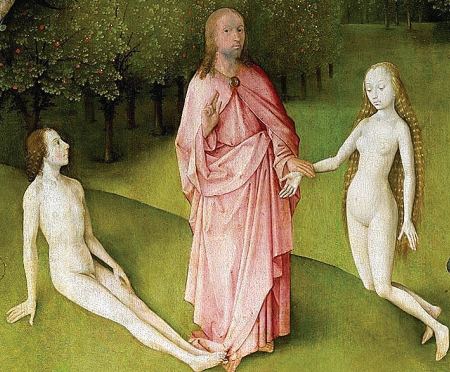
'The right to marry and found a family' is affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). International law continues to recognise that this a special right which men and women can only fulfil through each other, because only a man and a woman together have the potential to marry and create a family.

Isn't this discrimination against same-sex couples?

Unjust discrimination is always wrong, but the relationship between a man and woman in marriage cannot be the same as between two men or two women. A same-sex relationship may involve physical intimacy, but because it is not able to share in the life-giving dimensions of God's creative plan it cannot receive the gift of a child. Only the love and intimacy of a man and woman in marriage makes one flesh, and it is the intimacy of a man and a woman that creates new life. Marriage is so different that it is actually unjust to treat it as the same as any other sexual relationship.

What about infertile couples who don't have children?

Even if they are never blessed with a child – because of age, infertility or other circumstances – the marriage of a man and a woman is always a marriage. Their lovemaking is designed to unite them in 'one flesh' and to create new life, and always expresses this possibility.



Don't some same-sex couples have children and make good parents?

The generous and sacrificial love of a same-sex couple for any child they have the privilege to raise must be acknowledged. However a same-sex couple can only have children through the assistance of a third person. Having more than two parents makes it hard for children to know who they are and where they came from. It does not fully respect what is just for that child, who has a right to be conceived, loved and raised by his or her biological mother and father wherever possible, and to experience all the benefits of both mothering and fathering.

Would same-sex marriage make much difference to our society?

Changing the definition of marriage will make a huge difference to our society, because the two core elements of marriage – the mutual love of a man and a woman, and the gift of children – will be removed and no longer recognised by the law. This will profoundly alter our values, beliefs and aspirations as a society. Same-sex marriage will also make it very difficult for Catholics and others who believe in marriage to live, practise and publicly express our belief in marriage and teach this to our children in schools.

How can homosexual persons feel accepted and loved if they cannot marry their same-sex partners?

Following Jesus, the Church offers love and acceptance to everyone. It also invites each of us to grow in friendship with the Lord, and to discover the freedom which comes from not being controlled by our sexual desires. True acceptance and peace cannot be found by changing the meaning of marriage, but through seeking to understand and respect God's plan for our sexuality and to open ourselves more and more deeply to His love – the only love that can ultimately satisfy us.

Marriage hasn't always been defined as one man and one woman. What about polygamy?

In various times and places, including some places in the Old Testament, polygamy has been practised and tolerated. But polygamy was a deviation from God's original plan for marriage. Jesus Christ recalled all men and women to the original and true meaning of marriage by emphasising that in marriage husband and wife become one flesh: "*So they are no longer two, but one body*" (Matthew 19:6).

PLEASE READ MORE – Online resources

Life, Marriage and Family Centre

www.lifemarriagefamily.org.au

Australian Family Association

<http://www.family.org.au>

Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan (USCCB)

<http://old.usccb.org/loveandlife/MarriageFINAL.pdf>

Further reading

Anthony Percy, *Theology of the Body Made Simple*

Christopher West, *Good News about Sex and Marriage*

Paul Quay SJ, *The Christian Meaning of Human Sexuality*

Background Picture: Painting by Hieronymus Bosch – "*The Garden of Earthly Delights - The Earthly Paradise*" (Garden of Eden).