

Question: It seems unfair to say that gay people can't get married. It is a violation of their civil rights.

Answer: This issue seems to have taken center-stage in our cultural conversation, and there also seems to be some interesting (and misleading) rhetoric involved.

One of the most ingenious (and disingenuous) tactics that "gay rights" activists have employed is the use of the term "civil rights." Civil rights advocacy has a powerful and significant history in our country. It reminds us of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War, the women's suffrage movement and the repeal of Jim Crow laws. We, as a country, are sensitive to protecting civil rights. This is a very good thing.

That is why activists have begun speaking about the same-sex marriage debate in the context of civil rights. But we need to be clear here. No one in the Catholic Church is interested in taking away any person's civil rights. Civil rights are a class of rights that protect an individual's ability to participate in civil and political activity free from undue infringement by the state or private institutions.

No Catholic is advocating bullying, unjust discrimination or the denial of full participation in political and civil life to anyone, regardless of sexual orientation. All people are already guaranteed these freedoms under the Constitution. The law does not specify that men and women with same-sex attraction are included under these laws because every citizen is already included. There are literally no civil rights that straight Americans have that gay Americans don't have.

One could protest: "But a gay man or woman can't marry anyone they truly love!" Correct. But who can? No one can marry anyone they want. This is not a "gay rule." This same standard applies to all Americans. There are boundaries that are written into our very humanity. For example, I cannot marry my sister. I cannot marry my uncle. I cannot marry more than one person at the same time. And I cannot marry someone of my gender.

The law applies equally to all. Do we really want to enshrine in law "everyone has a right to marry whomever they want"? If we do, what are the limits to this?

If we can rewrite one standard (same-sex marriage) based solely on personal preference, then we can rewrite any of them (incest, polygamy, etc.). What I'm trying to address is the underlying principle. If the principle for change is based solely off "I have a sexual appetite for X; therefore, my sexual desire should be the moral equivalent of any other sexual desire," then there is no stopping this once it has started.

Someone might state, "This is not about sex; it's about love!" That's a very good point. But the sexual act is an essential part of marriage. In fact, you cannot have a valid sacramental marriage without the act of sexual intercourse occurring at least once. If all homosexual activists want is love without sexual acting out, then that's wonderful. We are all made for love — no exceptions. But not all expressions of love are good or healthy.

Now, I know that the comparison can make people upset or uncomfortable. Appearances aside, I am not trying to push buttons. I am merely asking the question: What is the essential difference between same-sex "marriage" and other sexual expressions that society has historically seen as wrong?

I wonder why there is no overwhelming rush in the gay community for marriage. I know what the news reports would have us think. But so-called "same-sex marriage" is already permitted in six jurisdictions in the United States. Any gay couple could travel to any one

of these jurisdictions and get "married" there. Did you know that only two-tenths of 1 percent of "married" households are same-sex couples? It makes me wonder if the push for new legislation is less about "being allowed to pursue the dream" of marriage and more about the moral legitimizing of a behavior.

There is no violation of civil rights in upholding the definition of marriage as it has stood since the beginning of our culture. The push for the redefinition of marriage is about government-enforced morality. It is about enshrining in law the moral equivalence of same-sex relationships to heterosexual relationships.