

16th April 2014
41/2014

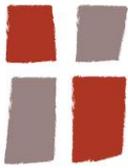
A STATEMENT BY THE BISHOPS ON THE CIVIL UNIONS LAW

With the Maltese Parliament having approved the law regulating civil unions and adoptions by same-sex couples, while wishing that the discussion continues with due respect to every person, irrespective of his/her sexual orientation and choices made, we as Bishops of Malta and Gozo feel we can convey the following:

1. Notwithstanding the changes we are going through, our society should strive to keep cherishing and giving preference to the natural family, built upon marriage between a man and a woman. This family, were the father and mother, driven by genuine love, bring life to the world and with love and sacrifice bring up and educate their children, is an indispensable resource to the Nation. If this family is done away with, we would have wounded humanity. Recently, Pope Francis himself said in no uncertain terms that “in the case of the family, the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another”¹.
2. One notes, with gratitude, that there is a strong sensibility in favour of children, be they the couple’s natural offspring or adopted. It is our duty to ensure that we have good legal instruments in place so that everybody respects the interests and the rights of children. We should stand guard over ourselves so that parents’ interest in children is motivated solely by a desire to satisfy the true needs of their children. A few days ago, Pope Francis said: “Said positively, it is necessary to reaffirm the right of children to grow up in a family, with a father and a mother capable of creating an ideal environment for their development and emotional maturity. To continue to mature in relation, in confrontation with what is the masculinity and the femininity of a father and a mother, and thus equipping their emotional maturity.”²

¹ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, par.66

² Speech to the International Catholic Office of Children, 11 April 2014



THE CHURCH IN MALTA

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3. No one can erase the differences and the sexual complementarity between a man and a woman. The relationships of homosexual couples, from their nature remain altogether different from those of heterosexual couples. The fundamental rights of each person, whoever he or she may be and whatever his or her sexual orientation may be, should always be safeguarded by the laws of a country.
4. Now that the Maltese State has introduced civil unions for same-sex couples, as Bishops we look forward to seeing the same State intensify its work so that the family built on marriage between a man and a woman is strengthened.

As spiritual shepherds, we encourage Christians and all people of good will to continually look towards Jesus Christ and, with his help, continue to grow in conformity with the will of God. Although the Creator's vision of marriage and sexuality is different from the one presented in this law, the Christian community is still duty-bound to show pastoral love towards each person, whoever they may be, and that the doors of the Church remain open to whoever sincerely seeks the Lord.

✠ **MARIO GRECH**

Bishop of Gozo

President of the Maltese Episcopal Conference

✠ **PAUL CREMONA O.P.**

Archbishop of Malta

✠ **CHARLES J. SCICLUNA**

Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar General of Malta