



Pastoral Letter

of His Grace Most Reverend Peter Stasiuk CSsR DD AM
Eparchy of Sts Peter and Paul of Melbourne
on the Same Sex Marriage Postal Survey

To the priests, deacons, monastics, religious and the faithful of the Eparchy of
Saints Peter and Paul

Praise be to Jesus Christ!

***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.
And a second is like it,
You shall love your neighbour as yourself." (Matthew 22, 37-39)***

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Ever mindful of my duty as Shepherd and Teacher I write to you on an important and topical subject. The initiative to redefine the meaning of marriage and, the voluntary postal survey that has been initiated by the Federal Government. We are being asked to vote "NO" or "YES" to a proposal that would allow people of the same sex to marry.

Through the media, social media and personal exchanges with a number of our faithful, I have come to appreciate the reasons that have been expressed by those wanting a "yes" vote. Many people talk about "equality" and "equal love". There is a focus on the dignity of the homosexual person and the desires they have to share in the same privileges that heterosexual people can enjoy - in this case the freedom to marry the person that they love. Many people believe that the redefinition of marriage is a way of achieving "equality" and is a human right.

The supporters of the "yes" case are passionate and sincere in their arguments. However as Christians we are called to something greater. St Paul says, *"That your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God"* (1 Cor 2,5) We are called through our baptism and our faith to turn towards God and to worship Him who gave us His Law that we may find life. As difficult as some may find the teaching of the Church we must always remember, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith"* (Romans 1,6)

We are commanded by Jesus to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind"* He says that on this is based the *"Law and the Prophets"* (Matt 22,40). It is God and His Law that we are called to love first. Having been strengthened by this love of God that is expressed to us thru the Law and the Prophets we are called to *"love your neighbour as yourself"*. God gives us His law to free us to love Him, ourselves and each other. This is a call to conversion! A call to change our hearts and minds; to be conformed in love with God.

In Psalm 118, 92 we pray *"Had not your law been my delight, O Lord, I should have perished in my affliction"* The psalmist reminds us that God's Law is seen as a liberating force, a spiritual power that relieves us of the burdens of our broken lives. God gives us His law to help us when we are weak and so we must always look at God's law as being His love for us. This love is made manifest in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ who came to show us the way to the Father by teaching us to understand God's Law. *"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them"* (Matt 5,17) As St Paul teaches, *"Do we, then, nullify the Law by this faith? By no means! Instead, we uphold the Law."* (Romans 3.31)

As Ukrainian Catholics we are taught that marriage is a "Mystery of Love between a Man and a Woman... In the gender differentiation a man and a woman complete one another creating an indissoluble union of one body." (Catechism UGCC 472) we are also called to believe that "Marriage as a union of love between a man and a woman derives from the very nature of the human person: Indeed from the beginning, God seems to have made special provisions for this union; and referring to the two as one Male and Female he created them. The mutual marital love of a husband and wife is the power and foundation of the growth of strong families and the creation of healthy societies." (Catechism UGCC 476)

We believe that every human being is created in the "image and likeness" of God. This dignity extends to saints and to sinners. Our dignity is not defined by our race, colour or creed, sexual orientation or marital status.. The dignity God gives us calls us to serve Him and undertake constant conversion and repentance. Only in this way can we begin to understand God's Law and conform our lives to His will.

Dear friends, we believe that marriage between a man and a woman is the "foundation of the growth of strong families and the creation of healthy societies". The Church does not choose this position, it is given to us by God. It is the Gospel – the Good News that has been proclaimed by Christ and preached by the Apostles and Fathers.. In our pluralist and secular society our faith has an important role to play. By our faith, and the worship of God we can shape the society we want in the future.

It is important that we see God in every person and encourage each other to live according to God's Law. This postal survey is not a vote for or against people who are homosexual. Whatever the outcome, the Church will continue to proclaim the Good News, a universal call to conversion and repentance.

I pray that the Holy Spirit may enlighten our minds and our hearts as we participate in this postal survey in a "spirit of truth". That we see the dignity in every person but also our vocation to worship the One True God, who, calls us to participate in the Holy Mysteries in a spirit of unity and peace. So let us "Commend ourselves and one another and our whole lives to Christ our God!"

May Blessings of our God be with us all!

Given at our Cathedral Church of Sts. Peter and Paul of Melbourne on the Fifteenth Day of September in the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand and Seventeen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter", with a cross symbol to its left.

+Peter

Eparch of Sts Peter and Paul of Melbourne
For Ukrainian Catholics in Australia, New Zealand and Oceania