



# Catholic Diocese of Geraldton

Bishop of Geraldton W.A.

17 August 2017

Dear people of the Diocese of Geraldton,

As Australians all of us are being called to participate in a voluntary postal vote on the issue of same-sex marriage. This question of changing the Marriage Act has been with us for some time.

I would like to offer you some thoughts on the Catholic Church's teachings and assist you in the decision you make through the postal vote. This is not an easy matter for many of you, requiring a lot of thought and reflection on how to approach the question which will be put to us. If necessary, further information from me or from the Australian Bishop's Conference will be sent out to assist everyone with their decision.

To put it simply, the Church cannot change its understanding of marriage to include same-sex couples. The foundation of the church's understanding of marriage goes a long way back in its Judeo-Christian heritage. Our belief about Marriage is the union between a man and a woman for life and open to the bringing up of children. Marriage is a Sacrament, expressing and revealing through the love of a man and a woman, the love of our God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of all life.

As a Church, this is our belief which has always been there and part of life for Catholics and many others in the wider community. This is the principle behind our belief and understanding of Marriage. This is also about the creation of a family through the love of a Mother and Father in marriage offering a loving and stable environment. This is the vision of Catholic marriage. As we know, this is not always the reality where people's circumstances and situations change. I always hope our Catholic community would be supportive and respectful of people in difficult relationships, people in blended families, those who raise their children by themselves or not able to have their own children.

With that belief, the Catholic community in Australia has a responsibility and a right to express its views respectfully to enable our understanding of marriage to be heard by all in the community. We do not "impose our views" as Archbishop Costelloe says, but "propose our views" for your consideration.

Our view does not suggest we support any unjust discrimination against same-sex couples or the taking away from them legal protections and government benefits. Many of us have family and friends in same-sex relationships, and love and respect them. There are no easy answers here or even ways for discussion. My hope is we can discuss how we vote, respectfully. Our different view to those supporting a change in the Marriage Act is not about rejection of people in same-sex relationships, it is about our belief and understanding of marriage.

As we exercise our right to vote, may we call on God's wisdom in the decision we make after we receive the Ballots on September 12. Ultimately our politicians will determine the direction we will take in Australia and we keep them in prayer. May our society continue to be a place where our families and children flourish in peace and love.

God's blessings and peace,

Yours sincerely

The Most Rev. Michael H. Morrissey  
Bishop of Geraldton