

## Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

A few weeks ago a Supreme Court in North America said that state laws prohibiting gay marriage are unconstitutional. That took place in Mexico. The opinion did not overturn state laws, but it opened the door to nationwide gay marriage. The Supreme Court of the United States has now said something stronger: The constitution requires that same-sex couples be allowed to marry no matter where they live.

The Catholic Church teaches in canon 1055 that marriage is a covenant established between a man and a woman. Our church does not recognize gay marriage because of how we understand the teaching of Jesus, the traditions we inherited, and the natural complementarity of male and female persons.

When two people marry, they obtain a civil license. In many countries couples get married in court and then have their church wedding later. More common in the United States is that a Catholic wedding is also the civil ceremony, and the priest or deacon acts as the minister of both Church and State. The State will now license gay couples, but our Church will not allow a Catholic minister to perform their weddings. Some people fear that the State will force priests and deacons to conduct gay marriage; others hope that priests and deacons will conduct gay marriage. Neither scenario is likely. The State has always permitted some marriages that our Church does not recognize, such as the case of someone who is marrying a second time without a Church annulment; the State has never forced Catholic ministers to perform such ceremonies.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church deals with homosexuality in three short paragraphs beginning at 2357. It states that sex between homosexual persons is contrary to the natural law. It also says that homosexual persons “must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.”

Pope Francis made history just a few months into his papacy when he responded to an interview question about gays working in the Vatican. He said, “If someone is gay, and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?” The pope did not change church teaching. He does not support gay marriage, but he did use a compassionate tone toward gays who have good will and search for the Lord. That was something new.

The Catholic Church often speaks out on matters pertaining to the common good: the environment, world peace, abortion, civil rights, and homosexuality. People don't always listen to us. Even within the church we have disagreements that ultimately lead to refinements. These come about because our leaders speak out in dialogue with society. As the prophet Ezekiel received his mission in today's first reading, the Lord said to him, “Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you. But you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD! And whether they heed or resist—for they are a rebellious house—they shall know that a prophet has been among them.” At this time in our country's history, people will speak up as they discern the will of God. We can all practice compassion and understanding to others, including gays, so that all those of good will who search for the Lord may find a home in our church.