

The Intricacies of Same-Sex Marriage

Marriage, better known in the Catholic world as Holy Matrimony, is one the most sacred sacraments along with the Holy Orders and Holy Confirmation. It is a sacred rite where two people are joined together, expressing their love for one another and their promise to share their lives together through thick and thin.

There are numerous reasons why couples wed, whether it is for a good reason or a not so good reason. First, they love each other so much that they want to spend the rest of their lives together, weathering any storm that comes their way. Second, couples marry because they want to start a family, thus, fulfilling the call for procreation. Third, others marry for companionship, being content in spending time with one another as long as they live. Fourth, there are those who marry because a man got a woman pregnant, wanting to save the woman's reputation.

In the Philippine context as well as in other countries, the acceptable married partners are a man and a woman, which evokes a traditional family setup, where they can fulfill the duty of procreation, the creation of new life. But what if the partners are of the same gender? Would this be acceptable to society or is it too radical to be accepted by people? How would their union fare in the eyes of other people? These and more would be discussed in this paper.

The clamor for recognizing the marriage between gay and lesbian couples in the legal system has been ongoing for years. And the controversy it induces has been evident for some time now that it has been the subject for debate such as other contentious issues such as abortion (Wardle, Strasser, Duncan & Orgon 2003) and euthanasia.

Up to now, same-sex marriage is deemed as controversial and radical issue because it steps on the concepts of a traditional family setup that is both acceptable to society and major religions. For instance, one of the joys and obligations of marriage is procreation wherein married couples beget a new life, their offspring, and raising and rearing their children correctly. On the other hand, procreation is not possible in a same-sex marriage, so the partners would have to resolve to child adoption, raise their children from a previous marriage or have one of the partners get pregnant through artificial insemination and give birth to an offspring. As for the children of a same-sex married couple, it would be difficult for them to accept such a radical family setup, especially when they may become the object of mockery of their peers as well as other people since society, like in the Philippines, is not yet ready to accept such an abnormal family structure. Hence, the children of a same sex married couple would then find it difficult to deal with this setup, especially when they do not have either a father or mother role model within the family. For a child, it is important to have both a father and mother because here, the children learn to first properly socialize with another person from his proper parents (ReligiousTolerance.org, n.d.), a father and a mother. In addition, there is a higher risk for the children to become a homosexual since he is very much exposed to his parents' homosexuality compared to children who are raised within traditional families.

For the Catholic Church, same-sex marriage is considered a desecration to the foundations of the holy matrimony. In fact, "the sacred scripture has always declared homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and contrary to natural law and in so far, as they close the sexual act to the gift of life and do not proceed from a genuine

affective and sexual complementary, thus, under no circumstances can they be approved” (May, n.d, p.1). Though same-sex marriage is deemed as unnatural and immoral that the Catholic Church would never condone, it still respects and understands the plight of homosexuals, their fight for recognition and acceptance.

Furthermore, based on the Catholic Church’s teachings, it is “God’s plan regarding the life-giving and loving union of man and woman in marriage. This entails that only in the marital relationship is the use of the sexual faculty morally good” (May, n.d., p. 3). Meanwhile, “to choose someone of the same sex for one’s sexual activity is to annul the rich symbolism and meaning, not to mention the goals of the Creator’s sexual design” (May, n.d., p. 3).

Though there are countries today that recognize same-sex marriage such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Canada and South Africa, there are still those that contradict same-sex marriage such as the Philippines and the United Kingdom (Black, 2003). Those that support same-sex marriage believe that marriage is a civil right, thus, it should not only be available for opposite gender couples. Also, they state that homosexual partners would be able to contribute to raising a family as much as what heterosexual partners can put in. At the same time, those who approve of same-sex union states that “same-sex marriage is moral enough to support the family centered marriage plays in society despite the absence of biological children” (Black, 2003, p. 5). At the same time, this would encourage homosexuals to marry one partner and rear families.

As for those who oppose same-sex marriage, allowing it would only distort the meaning of marriage and that people would be confused of the purpose of marriage as

seen by traditional, cultural and religious understanding. “Most of the controversy centers around governmental definitions of marriage, rather than the blessing of same-sex unions by individual religious organizations, which may or may not be recognized as civil marriages” (Black, 2003, p. 4). At the same time, most countries’ government does not offer benefits to same sex couples such as child tax credits and assistance.

Other than child tax credits and assistance, same-sex married couples are denied the right to share privileges such as “social security, medicare, family and medical leave, health care, disability, military and other benefits (now.org, n.d., p.3).

There are other arguments why same-sex marriage should not be made legal. First, same-sex marriage do not last. More and more homosexuals would rather have extra marital affairs or relationships or they prefer to live alone. In fact, “in a study of two thousand United States and European homosexuals in the 1960’s, researchers found out that living by oneself is probably the chief residential pattern for male homosexuals. It provides the freedom to pursue whatever style of homosexual life one chooses, whether it be furtive encounters in parks or immersion in the homosexual sub-culture. In addition, homosexual relationships are fragile enough to make this residential pattern common whether deliberate or otherwise” (Cameron, n.d., p. 2). Another study shows that in 1970, sixty one percent of gays and thirty-seven lesbians in San Francisco, California were living by themselves (Cameron, n.d.). Second, most gays and lesbians prefer to have various partners, thus, promoting polygamous affairs. Here, study shows that “in 1987, only twenty-three percent of homosexuals in London reported sexual exclusivity in the month before the interview” (Cameron, n.d. p. 4). Furthermore, “in 1990, only twelve percent of gays in Toronto, Canada mentioned that they were in

monogamous relationships” (Cameron, n.d., p. 4). Third, research shows that same-sex married couples are evidently doing dangerous and unsafe sexual adventures than uncommitted homosexuals. Its implication is that those who engage in risky sexual practices increase their chances in getting sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS. One study shows that “in 1983, near the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, homosexuals in San Francisco who to be in monogamous relationships were compared to those who were not. Without exception, those in monogamous relationships more frequently reported that they had engaged in biologically unhealthy sexual activity. As examples, 4.5% of the monogamous versus 2.2% of those who do not have partners had engaged in drinking urine, and 33.3% versus 19.6% claimed to practice oral-anal sex” (Cameron, n.d., p. 5). In addition, same-sex married couples “offer each other something different. They share biological intimacy and sexual risk-taking as the hallmark of trust and commitment. Being exposed in this way to the bodily charges of their partner increases the risk of disease, especially when the partner was married to someone else previously or engaged in sex with others outside the relationship” (Cameron, n.d. p. 6).

In conclusion, same-sex marriage has come a long way. Though it is approved and recognized in certain countries, thus proving that they are ready for such unions, and there are countries that bestow civil union to gays and lesbians instead, there are still those who oppose same-sex marriage. To those who oppose this, including myself, it is such bizarre and radical, thus, the Philippine society where a majority adheres to Catholic teachings and other countries are not yet ready to embrace this union. Same-sex marriage, in the Philippine context, is still very much a controversy as much as the recognition of a third sex in the Philippines, thus, many Filipinos still misunderstand and

garner biases against the case of both gays and lesbians, therefore, the Philippines would still not be able to accept same-sex marriage, especially when there are still issues about homosexuality that need to be cleared up.

One of the ways to clear issues regarding homosexuality is to promote awareness about it. There are organizations that promote awareness about the gay and lesbian community. One of them is Ang Ladlad, a nationwide association of Filipino Gays, Lesbians, Transgenders and Bisexuals that advocates “anti-discrimination” (Ang Ladlad, n.d. p. 1), to safeguard the gay and lesbian population and render “social support” (Ang Ladlad, n.d., p. 1). It is believed that once Filipinos are really aware about the concerns of the gay and lesbian community, then, the country may now be prepared to take a second look recognizing the third sex as well as same-sex marriage.

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