

Pastoral Letter on the Passing of Bill C38

To the Clergy and Faithful of the Archdiocese of Vancouver:

The House of Commons passed Bill C-38 last Wednesday June 29, changing the definition of “marriage” in Canadian law. However, a law cannot change what is inherent to what something is. An attempt to make such a law renders it ultimately groundless and gives legislators and the judiciary the impossible task of implementing that which lacks what is essential for law’s authority.

The government is not capable of changing marriage. The government did not create marriage, and marriage remains what it is and has always been: the union of one man and one woman for life, for the good of the spouses, for the procreating and raising of children, and for the good of society.

Canadians will continue to marry and to found families, as we always have.

If Bill C-38 becomes law, however, the law will no longer recognize the unique status and benefits that belong to married couples. We call on our Senators to act with the civic responsibility that is theirs: Do not make the same mistake the government has made. Please do not allow this bill to become law!

For our part, the Catholic Church will continue to recognize marriage as it is: an institution that the Church did not create, but is sworn to serve in truth. Our pastoral work, our schools, our social services, and our other ministries and social services will all continue to operate according to the true definition of marriage.

We know that we face misunderstanding and persecution for taking this stand. However, how can we not stand up for something that is so fundamental to the human person and human society?! We are all sworn to witness to the Truth. This past week, we celebrated the feasts of St. John the Baptist and St. Thomas More, two saints who in their time were martyred for their witness to the truth about marriage. We in our time recall their witness and personal sacrifice for the sake of marriage and the dignity of the human person.

We also recall the sacrifice that all people of faith and good will have made to uphold and defend the dignity of the human person.

I address all persons experiencing same-sex attractions: may you continue to seek Christ’s call to you, the call for all of us, to celebrate His gift of sexuality as a feature of what it means to be men and women who make visible the loving, caring and faithful way of Jesus Christ. Christ’s way is not an easy way — it is the way to the fullness of Life. Pastoral care of all people, including those persons with same-sex attractions, cannot be achieved in the way currently proposed by the Government of Canada. As your Bishop and Shepherd, I urge

you to turn to our Lord for assistance and support as we strive to live the fullness of chaste love and fellowship with one another. While the Church has not always adequately stood by those who are attracted to those of the same sex, it will continue to speak the truth about marriage, while offering help to those who want to live in conformity with God's law and Catholic teaching.

Relying on the way of the Cross to the Lord's resurrection, I acknowledge the valiant efforts of the many lay Catholics that have done so much to defend the definition of marriage. I call upon you to continue your efforts to uphold the truth about marriage not only in law but in every aspect of life. We know that the victory is the Lord's and that the truth will always prevail. Let us remain ever faithful, watchful, and persistent as we continue to witness to God's universal truth, in love.

Sincerely in Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend Raymond Roussin, SM
Archbishop of Vancouver