

Pastoral Letter of CRBC 2014
Response to the draft bill of Diverse Family System

Introduction

1. Recently, Taiwan has been influenced by the following movements coming from the West: “multi-culturalism”, “sexual liberation movement”, “radical feminism” and the “gay liberation movement”; some people try to caricature the mainstream meaning and value of marriage as “tyranny of heterosexual marriage and family” or “patriarchal family”, trying to completely change the meaning and value of family and marriage, seeking to change the law in order to achieve their ultimate goal which is the destruction of the family. By continually promoting open discussions in the media on the topics of homosexual marriage, civil unions and multiple person families, the draft bill of so-called Diverse Family System has won the sympathy and consent of a portion of the society, even including a small number of devout believers, especially young people, who have been influenced significantly.

The purpose of this pastoral letter is to apply God’s Revelation and the teaching of Church to the above-mentioned issues and to provide some rational argumentation, so that the clergy and the laity, when facing the issues related to homosexuality and those raised by the draft bill of “Diverse Family System” can effectively protect and explain the dignity of the institution of marriage with an attitude and stand consistent with Christian conscience. For the institution of marriage is not only the foundation of the family and the fundamental element for the stability of society, it is also designed and blessed by the Creator, for He created the human race as man and woman (Gn 1:27). Since this question relates to the natural moral law, the arguments that follow are addressed not only to those who believe in Christ, but to all persons committed to promoting and defending the common good of society.

I. The nature of marriage and family and their sanctity

2. The teaching of the Catholic Church on marriage, family and the complementarity between man and woman is not only a restatement of an evident truth that is intrinsically coherent and rationally understandable, but is also one recognized and defended by all the major cultures of the world. Marriage and family are not just any relationship between human beings. Both are above all instituted by the Creator God, possessing their unique nature, basic characteristics and finality (1). No ideology can erase from the human spirit the certainty that marriage exists solely between a man and a woman, who by mutual personal gift, proper and exclusive to themselves, tend toward the communion of their persons. In this way, they mutually perfect each other, in order to cooperate with God in the procreation and upbringing of new human lives (2).

3. Marriage and family belong to the truth of the natural order. This is not only affirmed by the Revelation of the Scriptures, but is also an expression of human wisdom and at the same time it is an obedient response to human nature and natural moral law. There are three fundamental elements of the Creator's plan for marriage, as narrated in the Book of Genesis:

In the first place, man, the image of God, was created “male and female” (Gen 1:27). Men and women are equal as persons and complementary as male and female. Sexuality is something that pertains to the physical-biological realm and has also been raised to a new level – the personal level – where nature and spirit are united.

Second, marriage is instituted by the Creator as a form of life in which a communion of persons is realized involving the use of the sexual faculty. “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24).

Third, God has willed to give the union of man and woman a special participation in his work of creation. Thus, he blessed the man and the woman with the words “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). Therefore, in the Creator's plan, sexual complementarity and fruitfulness belong to the very nature of marriage.

4. In the New Testament, Christ raised marriage between a man and a woman to the dignity of sacrament, therefore, Christian marriage is nothing less than “the effective symbol of the covenant between Christ and Church (cf. Eph 5:32). The meaning of Christian marriage diminishes not in the least the deep human value of “the union between man as husband and woman as wife”, but rather affirms and consolidates it. (Cf. Mt 19:3-12, Mk 10:6-9)

5. In the light of the Revelation and teachings in the Scriptures, there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God's plan for marriage and family. Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law. Homosexual acts “close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.” (3)

II. The challenge of the “Diverse Family System” to marriage and family

6. Recently, a number of groups have formed a coalition using “equality”, “anti-discrimination” and “forming family is a basic human right (this includes what is not limited to marriage right)” as a slogan for their claim. These groups maintain that people should not be systematically treated unequally, or excluded from forming families according to one’s sexual orientation or inclination, they should receive the same rights and benefits just as heterosexual spouses. Consequently, they strongly promote the movement for legalization of a Diverse Family System. In addition, October of this year,

these groups formally announced a draft law to amend to the Civil Code, which includes equal rights for homosexual marriage, civil unions and multiple partner households which deconstruct marriage and family relationships (4).

The threefold draft bill “Diverse Family System” not only aims directly at the possibility of adopting children, but more importantly, the promoters have already publicly admitted that their ultimate goal is the destruction of family and marriage(4).

III. Arguments from reason against the legalization of “Diverse Family System”

7. Faced with the fact of homosexual unions, civil authorities adopt different positions. At times they simply tolerate the phenomenon; at other times they advocate legal recognition of such unions, under the pretext of avoiding, with regard to certain rights, discrimination against persons who live with someone of the same sex. In other cases, they favour giving homosexual unions legal equivalence to marriage properly so-called, along with the legal possibility of adopting children. Moral conscience demands that in any situation Christian believers must witness to the integrity of the moral truth, including not agreeing to homosexual sexual behavior, not agreeing to any kind of homosexual union that would destroy marriage and family based on one man and one woman, and not agreeing to any unjust discrimination against people with homosexual orientation. In order to understand more clearly why one should oppose the legal recognition of homosexual unions, we will offer below a set of moral reasons. For lifestyles and their underlying presuppositions not only externally shape the life of society, but also tend to modify the younger generation's perception and evaluation of forms of behavior. Legal recognition of homosexual unions would obscure certain basic moral values and cause a devaluation of the institution of marriage.

From the order of right reason and natural moral law

8. The scope of the civil law is certainly more limited than that of the moral law, but civil law cannot contradict right reason without losing its binding force on conscience (6). Every humanly-created law is legitimate insofar as it is consistent with the natural moral law, recognized by right reason, and insofar as it respects the inalienable rights of every person (7). Laws in favour of homosexual unions are contrary to right reason because they confer legal guarantees, analogous to those granted to marriage, to unions between persons of the same sex. Given the values at stake in this question, the State could not grant legal standing to such unions without failing in its duty to promote and defend marriage as an institution essential to the common good. It might be asked how a law can be contrary to the common good if it does not impose any particular kind of behaviour, but simply gives legal recognition to a *de facto* reality which does not seem to cause injustice to anyone. In fact, once the bill of “Diverse Family System” is passed, its consequences are not only extremely serious, with deep and far-reaching impact, it will contribute to the complete destruction of the structure of society, in detriment to the common good. Civil laws are structuring principles of man's life in society, for good or for ill. They “play a very important and sometimes decisive role in

influencing patterns of thought and behaviour” (8). Life style and the underlying and implicit premises of one’s life style not only brings about the exterior form of social life, but also will change the way the youth of the next generation thinks about and evaluates models of behavior. The legalization of homosexual unions will blur moral values and lead people to undervalue marriage.

From the biological and anthropological order

9. Homosexual unions are totally lacking in the biological and anthropological elements of marriage and family which would be the basis, on the level of reason, for granting them legal recognition. Such unions are not able to contribute in a proper way to the procreation and survival of the human race. The possibility of using recently discovered methods of artificial reproduction, beyond involving a grave lack of respect for human dignity (9), does nothing to alter this inadequacy. Homosexual unions are also totally lacking in the conjugal dimension, which represents the human and ordered form of sexuality. Sexual relations are human when and insofar as they express and promote the mutual assistance of the sexes in marriage and are open to the transmission of new life. As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development. This is gravely immoral and in open contradiction to the principle, recognized also in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the best interests of the child, as the weaker and more vulnerable party, are to be the paramount consideration in every case.

From the social order

10. Society owes its continued survival to the family, founded on marriage. The inevitable consequence of legal recognition of homosexual unions would be a redefinition of marriage, which would become, in its legal status, an institution devoid of essential reference to factors linked to heterosexuality; for example, procreation and raising children. If, from the legal standpoint, marriage between a man and a woman were to be considered just one possible form of marriage, the concept of marriage would undergo a radical transformation, with grave detriment to the common good. By putting homosexual unions on a legal plane analogous to that of marriage and the family, the State acts arbitrarily and in contradiction to its duties. The principles of respect and non-discrimination cannot be invoked to support legal recognition of homosexual unions. Differentiating between persons or refusing social recognition or benefits is unacceptable only when it is contrary to justice (10). The denial of the social and legal status of marriage to forms of cohabitation that are not and cannot be marital is not opposed to justice; on the contrary, justice requires it. On the contrary, there are good reasons for holding that such unions are harmful to the proper development of human society, especially if their impact on society were to increase.

From the legal order

11. Because married couples ensure the succession of generations and are therefore eminently within the public interest, civil law grants them institutional recognition. Homosexual unions, on the other hand, do not need specific attention from the legal standpoint since they do not exercise this function for the common good. Nor is the argument valid according to which legal recognition of homosexual unions is necessary to avoid situations in which cohabiting homosexual persons, simply because they live together, might be deprived of real recognition of their rights as persons and citizens (11). In reality, they can always make use of the provisions of law – like all citizens from the standpoint of their private autonomy – to protect their rights in matters of common interest. It would be gravely unjust to sacrifice the common good and just laws on the family in order to protect personal goods that can and must be guaranteed in ways that do not harm the body of society (12).

IV The Position of Christians with regard to legislation in favor of Diverse Family System

12. In order to be effective while facing the campaign for the draft bill for “Diverse Family System”, it is necessary that Christians adopt vigilant and prudent actions, including exposing how tolerance is manipulated and exploited by ideologues. The lifestyle of these kinds of partners is immoral. One should remind the government that they need to implement certain regulations towards this phenomenon, to protect the public morality, to prevent youth from being influenced towards mistaken concepts regarding sex and marriage, lest youth be deprived of the protection they should have and thus facilitating the spread of the phenomenon. As to those who not only accept, but even promote special legal rights being granted to homosexual cohabitation, first we have to discern clearly, on the one hand, private sex-same sexual behavior and, on the other hand, making homosexuality a kind of normal behavior in the society – as something expected and approved, even that should be legally institutionalized. Therefore, one must bear in mind that tolerating the existence of evil does not mean to comply with evil and make it legal.

According the Church’s teaching concerning the homosexual orientation of men and women, especially those men and women who identify themselves as Christians, they must be accepted “with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.” Like other Christians, homosexual persons are called to chastity (14). However, while loving and accepting people with same sex orientation, it is necessary to be completely clear that it does not mean we should accept same-sex sexual behavior or the destruction of the family that will result from the initiative to legalize “Diverse Family System”, because those who engage in same-sex sexual behavior “close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity” (15), further, it is “Among the sins gravely contrary to chastity” (16), therefore, “Under no circumstances can they be

approved.”(17)

13. Chastity is included among the gifts of the Holy Spirit St. Paul refers to under temperance. And he condemns immoral acts that are against chastity naming them sins which are unworthy of Christian identity, and they are among the vices which impede man from entering the kingdom of heaven (18). “This is the will of God, your holiness: that you refrain from immorality, that each of you know how to acquire a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in lustful passion as do the Gentiles who do not know God; not to take advantage of or exploit a brother in this matter, for the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you before and solemnly affirmed. For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not a human being but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you.” (1 Th 4:3-8, cf. Col 3:5-7, 1 Tm 1:10)

Chastity is not only limited to avoiding the immoral acts that have been mentioned. Chastity orientates us to a higher and more positive goal and calls us to pursue it proactively. This virtue is related to the whole person, including interior and exterior behavior. The more Christians treasure the value of chastity and their role in life as man and woman, the more they understand the moral requirement of chastity. In the same way, they understand better how they themselves in the spirit of obedience to the Magisterium are able to receive and put into practice in the concrete situation what their right conscience reveals to them. Each person should according to his life situation possess this virtue. For certain people, chastity means pursuing virginity or offering themselves to God through a celibate life. This is a noble way which makes it easier to completely give oneself as an offering to God. For all people, chastity means living a lifestyle which morality commands, according to whether one is married or single. No matter what a person’s identity is, chastity is not simply only an exterior sign, it must lead one’s heart to a purity that is consistent with Christ’s word: “Everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Mt 5:28)

V. Concrete actions

14. Concerning same-sex sexual behavior and the draft of the civil law for “Diverse Family System”, clergy and laity should in faith according to the Truth revealed by God and the natural moral law, rationally and firmly reject any behavior against chastity, and courageously oppose any attempt to create legal recognition of homosexual unions.

Parish priests, church organizations and leaders or counselors of church communities should provide the appropriate opportunities to state and explain the fundamental position and attitude of the Church.

Lay people who are in politics, while facing the draft in favor of homosexual unions, have the moral duty to publicly clarify and speak against it.

Parents and teachers of young people who have the mission and responsibilities respectively in the home and the school, should teach young people to understand our

Catholic faith and the Church's moral teaching on sex.

Lastly, all the laity, especially young people, should under the light of the Holy Spirit and through spiritual life and prayer, follow Jesus in order to know and accept God's truth and the Church's teaching and live out the life and values of a Christian.

15. Regarding homosexual individuals, first of all, we must clarify: "The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial." (19) Therefore, we must avoid any unjust discrimination and unfair behavior, and with prudence and love we must accept, respect and accompany homosexual individuals. However, while accepting and respecting homosexual individuals, one must remain prudent and cautious, and clearly understand that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved." (20) But the most important of all, we must remember that, "these persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition." (21) In fact, each one of God's people should offer his own trials in union with the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

16. All Christian men and women having same-sex orientation belong to the family of the Church and have a special calling from God: "Homosexual persons are called to chastity. Through the virtue of self-mastery they develop inner freedom and with the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection." (22) All Christian men and women having same sex orientation, like all other Christians, should make effort on the path of faith to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: living a Christian life according his own identity, call and invitation. They should live out their chastity according to the methods provided by the Church and obtain strength from their spiritual life, so as to transcend their passions. They should pray continually, receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist, being careful to avoid the occasions of sin, carrying everyday their own cross following Jesus, at the same time hoping in their heart for their reward: "If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him." (2 Tm 2:11-12) All Christians, especially young people, should zealously cultivate devotion to Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, and follow the example of the lives of the saints and other devout Christians, in particular those young people who excel in chastity.

Conclusion

17. The whole people of God must give importance to chastity, its beauty and its power because it raises humanity, and enables people to have genuine, selfless, generous and respectful love. We must respect the person of homosexuals, but never approve same-sex sexual behavior or grant legal recognition to homosexual unions. The common good

demands the law recognize, promote and protect the institution of marriage because it is the foundation of the family and the basic cell of society. Granting legal recognition to homosexual unions, or considering it to be equal to marriage, does not only mean accepting deviant sexual behaviors, but will also lead to them becoming a model for today's society, thereby obscuring the common and inherited basic value of humanity which is the institution of marriage. Consequently, for the good of all men and women, and for the welfare of society, the Church will not and cannot stop maintaining these values, and at the same time, inviting all God's people to protect the true institution of marriage and family, which God himself willed.

Let us recommend all married couples, parents, children to the intercession of the Blessed ever Virgin Mary, Mother of families, and ask Her to lead each family to know Her Son and God's Truth which is love.

CRBC

2014 Chinese New Year

Notes:

- (1) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (1965), 48
- (2) Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons (2003), 2
- (3) Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) (1992), 2357
- (4) Cf articles on 'Diverse Family System' in "You Can Also Choose Your Family," Wealth Magazine, 408: 62-63; <http://tapcpr.wordpress.com/> ; <http://www.cooloud.org.tw/node/71234>
- (5) Cf. John Paul II, The Gospel of Life Encyclical (1995), 71
- (6) Cf. The Gospel of Life Encyclical, 72
- (7) Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 1-11, 95, a.2
- (8) The Gospel of Life Encyclical, 90
- (9) Cf. CDF, The Gift of Life (1987), II. A. 1-3: A. Heterologous artificial insemination
- (10) Cf. Summa Theologica, II-II, q. 63, a.1, c
- (11) Cf. Note 4
- (12) CDF, Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual persons, 14
- (13) CCC (1992), 2358; Cf. CDF, On the Pastoral Care of the Homosexual Persons (1986), 10
- (14) CCC (1992), 2359; Cf. CDF, On the Pastoral Care of the Homosexual Persons (1986), 12
- (15) CCC (1992), 2357
- (16) CCC (1992), 2396
- (17) CCC (1992), 2357
- (18) Cf. Galatians 4:3-8, 1 Cor. 6:9-11
- (19) CCC (1997 revised Latin edition), 2358
- (20) CCC (1992), 2357
- (21) CCC (1992), 2358
- (22) CCC (1992), 2359

“Since this is a pastoral letter on a complex and controversial issue, the Bishops’ Conference felt that in order to express exactly the teaching of the Magisterium it should incorporate the relevant parts of the document “Consideration Regarding Proposals To Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons” by the then Cardinal Ratzinger.