

In light of the action of the Supreme Court in the case of “marriage equality,” we are rapidly moving toward needing to answer the question, “Can a called and ordained servant of Christ officiate at a same-sex wedding?”

Thus far, the Church has answered this in the negative. And, indeed, it would seem initially that it would be impossible for one Called and Ordained by Christ to stand in His stead and by His command to speak His word could not participate. But I have recently begun to rethink this idea.

The fundamental problem in speaking the truth is that the Church of our day is caught up in the delusion that we are only to speak of welcoming words of kindness and niceness in the hopes of winning trust and building relationships. In short, there is a false spirit in the church that claims we must “win the right” to speak the truth, rather than seeing Christ as our Lord commissioning us to speak as His emissary to wayward people. In short, even the conservative and confessional church has given itself over to a Church-Growth philosophy that insists that we must hide the truth to ingratiate ourselves to the culture in order to “win souls” for Christ.

Does Christ not have anything to say to those who would seek to enter into a homosexual union? I would say that He does.

Does the Church not have a command to speak to sinners His Word, “in season and out?” I would argue we do.

Do not both the Law and the Gospel speak to homosexuals? I would argue it does.

The difficulty is that Christ's words to those held captive to sin and caught up in a homosexual relationship are difficult to say and unpleasant to hear. But, they are none-the-less Christ's words that He wills to be spoken. They are words of Law that condemn the sinner in order to bring him to the point where he desires the hope and forgiveness offered in the Gospel.

In considering these things, I have been brought to the conclusion that the Church and her pastors can, in good conscience and with integrity, officiate as agents of the state in the ratification of a contract joining a homosexual couple.

What follows is a draft of what a Church rite may look like that accomplishes this:

*Proposed rite for the joining of individuals in an unholy state contract of
“marriage”*

Prior to the ceremony, the officiant ought to counsel, admonish, and exhort the individuals to relent from their path of self-destruction. If such admonition proves to be futile and the individuals still desire to enter into a state contract of marriage through the officiating of a clergyman of The Church, the following provides a template for how a clergyman may accomplish. It is best if the couple is furnished with a copy of the rite to be used prior to the setting of the date so that they are fully informed as to the rite.

[P] In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

[C] AMEN.

[P] Dear friends and fellow citizens, we are gathered as witnesses to the contractual union of _____ and _____ which the State of _____ calls “marriage” in which they hope to find fulfillment and contentment as a couple.

Though the state, by divine right, may create such an institution and call it by whatever name it wishes, the marriage created by this contract is not to be confused with the union of man and woman described in Holy Scripture as marriage.

In the beginning, God created them male and female and decreed that a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his woman (wife) and the two shall become one flesh. This one flesh union of man and woman is the biblical definition of marriage. It is intended by God not merely for mutual companionship, help and support, and that the man and woman who enter into it may find delight in one another and also bring forth children as the natural fruit of the one-flesh union they share and establishes the family as the foundational institution of a just society.

More important than this, however, is the reality that the marriage of a man to a woman is a picture of the communion between Christ and His bride, the Church as the Word of the Lord declares in Ephesians chapter 5 when the Apostle sent by Christ to teach the church writes:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Our Lord blessed and honored Biblical marriage with His presence and first miracle at Cana in Galilee. And God's institution of marriage, and the relationship that it establishes, is commended to us by the apostle Paul as good and honorable.

While some of the earthly purposes are fulfilled by the state contract being entered into by _____ and _____, it is impossible that this spiritual reality is seen by their union.

However, under the laws of the state of _____, clergy are authorized to solemnize the state contract of marriage, and in our litigious society, to refuse to do so could subject the church to much expense, pain and trouble. And, while God provides no blessing for their union and therefore I can speak no good word of God to them, that does not mean that God's Word is silent about the type of union that _____ and _____ desire to enter..

While mutual companionship, help and support as friends remain available to all persons of whatever

sex, the conjugal rights of husband and wife are also a part of the biblical definition of marriage. However, such physical relations as may occur between two men or two women which may approximate the conjugal relationship of husband and wife are forbidden as an abomination and are condemned as sinful. St. Paul goes so far as to state, that those who practice such things do not acknowledge God and that God has given them over to a debased mind to receive in themselves the due penalty for their error.

As God has reserved such punishment for Himself, as His own prerogative, all that is given to His Church is to warn and entreat _____ and _____ to repent and turn back from this path which will ultimately lead to heart ache and imperils their eternal salvation.

And yet, even after such entreaty, _____ and _____ have indicated privately that they still desire to enter into an unholy state-sanctioned marriage. Therefore, to fulfill their desire to act according to their own will apart from the God who created them and daily gives them breath. They have gathered us as witnesses to their rebellion.

If this rite is being used as an independent service, the following or other appropriate passages of Scripture are read: Genesis 2:7,8-24, Ephesians 5:1-2,22-33; Romans 1:18-32; Galatians 5:16-24. A sermon is also preached. The couple may be seated throughout.

If the couple and attendants have been seated, they now stand and take their places before the chancel steps.

"As an agent of the state, I am authorized to ratify this unholy, unrighteous, abominable contract which you are choosing to enter and you have requested me to do so. However, I am also a called and ordained servant of Christ sent by Him to speak God's Word. As God's servant, I am required to tell you that you are about to enter into a union which God condemns. God desires that you repent - that you turn from your perversion of what He created good and cling to the forgiveness, restoration and hope of eternal life that is yours in Christ.

Addressing in turn each party:

[P] With the foregoing in mind, do you, _____(name)_____ still desire to be joined by the state in a contract that binds you one to another in order that you may fulfill your unholy lust? If so, answer say, "I do."

[R] I do.

Again, addressing each party in turn:

[P] Having declared your desire to be bound to one another in unholiness and unrighteousness, _____(name)_____ repeat after me:

I _____(name)_____ reject the grace and mercy of God in Christ and I embrace the unholiness and unrighteousness of my flesh by joining myself to you _____(name)_____ in a contract for that purpose recognized by the State.

The rite concludes:

[P] Having rejected Christ and His mercy, I can speak to you no blessing but can only warn of God's

wrath and pray to the Lord on your behalf that He will change your mind and heart and grant you mercy, repentance and forgiveness in the Name of Christ Jesus our Lord.

[P] However, having been enjoined by the State of ____ to ratify this union which God deems abominable, by the power vested in me by the State of ____ I hereby ratify this contract of union and declare that in the eyes of the State of ____, you are ([husband and husband] or [wife and wife]), may God have mercy on your souls."

[C] AMEN!

[P] Let us pray . . .

O God, your word teaches that you desire not the death of the sinner, but that he turn from his evil ways and live. Send forth your Holy Spirit and change the minds of these two individuals - that they may see your love and mercy in Christ and receive forgiveness for their folly. Turn their hearts away from fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and toward you, that they may know forgiveness and the restoration that you offer in Christ in order that they would be received as your children into the eternal kingdom where life and joy abounds forever. This we pray in the name of Him who has saved all sinners from death through the forgiveness offered through His blood - your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, World without end. AMEN."

The pastor publicly signs the marriage certificate and has the witnesses do the same at a table placed outside the chancel for that purpose. And the service concludes:

[P] Depart now from the presence of the Lord whom you have despised until you should repent and seek His mercy and grace for your unrighteousness.

The pastor departs the chancel and retires to his office or departs from the premises having arranged for the trustees or others responsible for the care and maintenance of the church to secure the property.