



Pope Francis and Civil Unions: the Backstory

Most Rev. Salvatore J. Cordileone
October 21, 2020

Earlier today it was reported that in a new documentary, *Francesco*, Pope Francis stated, “Homosexual people have the right to be in a family. They are children of God. You can’t kick someone out of a family, nor make their life miserable for this. What we have to have is a civil union law; that way they are legally covered.” [AP Story](#)

Archbishop Cordileone responds:

“In our bishops region’s audience with Pope Francis last January during our *ad limina* visit (the visit diocesan bishops make every five years to the Vatican), the topic of civil unions came up in conversation. The Holy Father clearly differentiated between a civil arrangement which accords mutual benefits to two people, and marriage. The former, he said, can in no way be equated to marriage, which remains unique.

“I would add that a civil union of this type (one which is not equated to marriage) should be as inclusive as possible, and not be restricted to two people of the same sex in a presumed sexual relationship. There is no reason, for example, why a brother and a sister, both of whom are unmarried and support each other, should not have access to these kinds of benefits. Marriage is unique because it is the only institution that connects children to their mothers and fathers, and therefore *is* presumed to be a sexual relationship. Indeed, the sexual relationship that marriage is presumed to involve is the only kind by which children are naturally made. The nature of marriage, the place of sex within a virtuous life, these great teachings of the Church come to us from God, are illuminated by reason, and do not change.”

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