

Media Statement



23 September, 2017

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, in responding to requests for comment on the question of protection for freedom of religion in relation to the possibility of a “yes” vote in the same sex-marriage postal survey, indicated that the question of freedom of religion, which many believe may be imperiled to a greater or lesser degree by a “yes” vote and a subsequent change to the marriage act to allow for same-sex marriage, goes beyond the question of the freedom of clergy to decline to celebrate same-sex marriages.

Speaking specifically in relation to the Catholic Church, the Archbishop noted that the Church, especially in its schools, but also in other Church-sponsored institutions and agencies, should not be prevented from maintaining, promoting and defending its deeply-held, long-standing beliefs about the following matters: the institution of marriage; its importance in providing a stable environment in which children can ideally be raised by their natural mother and father; the deepest meaning of human sexuality; and the importance of people, and the institutions of which they seek to be a part, being free to express their religious beliefs and follow their conscientious convictions without fear of legal or other negative consequences.

In relation to Catholic education in particular, Archbishop Costelloe noted that Catholic schools exist to provide the best education possible to all children whose parents chose a Catholic education for their children. Parents freely make such a choice knowing the religious basis and identity of the school. They can rightly expect that their children will be educated in a context which supports a Catholic ethos. Parents who do not wish to have their children educated in such a context have other educational options available to them, most notably of course Government schools. This is also true of teachers and others who seek employment in a Catholic school. Should they feel unable or unwilling to support the Catholic ethos of the school, they have other employment options open to them. No one is obliged to send their children to a Catholic school, and no one is obliged to work in a Catholic school. Presumably those who do make these choices do so fully informed of the nature of the institution they are entering. The obligation and the capacity of the school to be faithful to the implied contract it enters into with parents as regards the nature of the education being offered to their children is the real issue to be considered in this matter.

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB
Catholic Archbishop of Perth

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