

In wake of same-sex marriage ruling, Archbishop Lori and fellow bishops seek freedom to practice, not just preach

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In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's divided 5-4 ruling that makes same-sex marriage the law of the land, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is focused on Catholics' freedoms to not just speak and teach their beliefs, but to put them into practice.

"As I understand the decision, it makes a nod in the direction of religious liberty, but not enough of one," said Baltimore Archbishop William Lori, chairman of the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, during a telephone press conference June 26, the same day of the Supreme Court ruling.

"I think it respects free speech," Archbishop Lori said, adding that he believed the church would be allowed to continue "to speak, to teach, to advocate for the true nature of marriage."

However, he added, "it does not protect our right to implement our teaching and follow our teaching ... when we interact with broader society."

Archbishop Lori said that he foresees "many challenges and legal controversies, and we will do our best to protect ourselves in terms of how we organize and run our ministries, and advocate for protections at the state and local levels."

The church should be able to operate its ministries "without fear of being silenced, penalized," he said.

Through social services, the archbishop added, “we serve millions of people every day. We do it well and we do it lovingly.”

Anthony Picarello, USCCB general counsel, said that challenges could arise in the areas of accreditation of Catholic institutions such as schools, as well as their tax-exempt statuses as their teachings oppose same-sex marriage, now the law of the land.

Hiring practices and employment benefits could also be challenging areas, Picarello added.

“We’ve seen these in states that have aggressive anti-sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination laws,” he said, adding that the church would “organize internally” to protect itself while seeking external protections at the state and other levels.

Picarello also noted that things are already changing in “the civil sphere” as a result of the ruling.

“A newspaper in Pennsylvania said it will no longer accept op-eds criticizing same-sex marriage,” he said. “They’ve already moved to silence debate on the question.”

An editorial by The Patriot-News in Harrisburg was modified at 12:58 p.m. on June 26 to state that the newspaper will “very strictly limit op-eds and letters to the editor in opposition to same-sex marriage.”

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services USA, a member of the USCCB Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, commented that “the narrowness of the ruling indicates that the debate is unsettled.”

During the telephone press conference, a reporter from the Boston Globe referred to polls indicating a majority among those who identified as Catholic as supporting same-sex marriage.

“The words of St. Paul come to mind,” Archbishop Lori said. “We preach the truth, but love in season and out of season. Very often, it’s helping people to see not a caricature of what marriage and family life is, but the true beauty and truth of that vocation.”

Archbishop Lori added, “The Gospel is always going to be to some extent counter-

cultural. We've been living with this for 2,000 years and we expect to live with it for a few more."

In an interview with *The Catholic Review*, the archbishop said that he cannot predict how the law will immediately effect states which, until the ruling, prohibited same-sex marriage.

"Some of them will enact religious liberty protections," he said. "I hope many of them will."

As same-sex marriage, also known as gay marriage, has been the law of the land in Maryland since 2013, the archbishop said that he does not expect too many immediate effects in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

"I think it will be different interacting with the federal government, but even that had already begun to change," he said.

June 26 was the sixth day of the Fortnight for Freedom, an annual two-week period of prayer, discussion and advocacy focused on the preservation of religious liberty, coordinated by the USCCB.

See also:

[USCCB president calls Supreme Court ruling on marriage 'tragic error'](#)

[Court rules same-sex marriage legal nationwide](#)