

Bishop Thomas' Reflection on Pope Francis' "Civil Unions" Statement

Pope Francis' comments regarding civil unions were made in the context of the documentary interview called *Francesco* by filmmaker Evgeny Afineevsky.

In this documentary, the Pope expressed an openness to laws that recognize civil unions, including those of gay couples.

The Holy Father's remarks do not change the Catholic Church's consistent teachings that marriage is, as Jesus taught, "the union of man and woman as the Creator willed it..." ([Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1614 – see #1602-1620 on Marriage in God's Plan.](#))

Rather, the Pope's observations flow from the life stories of persons in a variety of domestic partnerships who have faced struggles and hardships in their daily lives over benefits that married couples often take for granted.

In the past these included issues like the ability to participate in employer sponsored health insurance programs, access to loved ones who are hospitalized, and survivor benefits.

The Holy Father has been consistent in his belief that "...marriage is a union between a man and women. You can't change it just like that." He wrote, "It's the nature of things."

The Pope's recognition of "civil unions" is the first time that a Pope has acknowledged the possible benefits associated with these unions.