

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC  
ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA

THE OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Each U.S. Supreme Court decision that has ever been rendered has resulted in deep disappointment for some people and vindication for others. If we all agreed on the outcomes of these divisive cases, there would simply be no reason for the Court to convene. This most recent decision is no different.

By the same token, every court decision is limited in what it can achieve; again, this one is no exception. It does not change the biological differences between male and female human beings or the requirements for the generation of human life, which still demands the participation of both. It does not change the Catholic Church's teaching regarding the Sacrament of Matrimony, which beautifully joins a man and woman in a loving union that is permanent in commitment and open to God's blessing of precious new life.

This judgment, however, does not absolve either those who may approve or disapprove of this decision from the obligations of civility toward one another. Neither is it a license for more venomous language or vile behavior against those whose opinions continue to differ from our own. It is a decision that confers a civil entitlement to some people who could not claim it before. It does not resolve the moral debate that preceded it and will most certainly continue in its wake.

This moral debate must also include the way that we treat one another – especially those with whom we may disagree. In many respects, the moral question is at least as consequential and weighty as the granting of this civil entitlement. The decision has offered all of us an opportunity to continue the vitally important dialogue of human encounter, especially between those of diametrically differing opinions regarding its outcome.

The decision has made my ministry as a pastor more complex since it demands that I both continue to uphold the teachings of my Church regarding the Sacrament of Matrimony while also demanding that I insist upon respect for the human dignity of both those who approve of the judgment as well as those who may disapprove.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wilton D. Gregory".

✠ Wilton D. Gregory  
Archbishop of Atlanta