

KUDOS TO PEORIA CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Peoria recently took a stand against a proposed bill in Illinois that sought to force religious organizations, that provide adoption services, to service relationships that are contrary to their positions if they would like to continue receiving state funding.

If the state of Illinois wants to grant adoption rights to homosexual couples in a civil union, it has a right to do so. But it has no right to force its will on those who, as a matter of conscience, disagree. This is especially true when conscience rights are grounded in religion: the First Amendment kicks in at this point.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Peoria does not discriminate between heterosexuals or homosexuals. It simply defends the institution of marriage. Heterosexual men and women who cohabit are no different from homosexual couples who live together: neither are married and both are therefore disqualified from receiving the sponsorship of Catholic adoption services. They can go elsewhere, and are indeed advised of alternative services by Catholic Charities.

But no one has a right to demand that a religion forfeit its doctrinal prerogatives by bowing to the secular creed of the state in matters of marriage and the family. Those who truly believe in diversity will respect the plea for pluralism made by Catholic Charities.

If separation of church and state means anything, it means the right of religious bodies to practice their faith without state encroachment.