

June 26, 2015

*No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate, marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death. It would misunderstand these men and women to say they disrespect the idea of marriage. Their plea is that they do respect it, respect it so deeply that they seek to find its fulfillment for themselves. Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization's oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right. The judgment of the Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit is reversed. It is so ordered.*

(Final words of Justice Anthony Kennedy)

Beloved Saints,

This morning, the Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution's guarantees of due process and equal protection under the law mean that states cannot ban same-sex marriages. With this ruling, same-sex marriage is now legal in all 50 states. Prior to today's ruling, same-sex marriage was legal in 36 states and Washington, D.C. There were also 13 state bans in place, Michigan being one of those. The court ruled in a 5-4 decision.

I am writing now, as your spiritual and pastoral leader, responding to this decision and to assure you of my understanding that a decision of this magnitude will elicit a range of responses. Each Sunday at the end of our worship we now sing the words of blessing together ending with, "*And may you never forget that you are loved.*" Over the past two years I have found new meaning (and hope) in those words as I have watched you live into that promise with me and with each other. Being loved does not necessarily mean that we will always agree. In fact, I am coming to believe that one of the gifts of truly accepting God's love means that we CAN disagree without the risk of fracturing relationships or creating chasms too wide to cross.

There will be some in this country who will celebrate today. There will be some in this country today who will, as Judge Scalia articulates in his dissenting opinion, find this decision, "deeply disheartening." This is what I want us all to hear. You are loved. Each of us is created and designed to bear the mark of God's love in our lives in a unique and important way. Each of us is a glorious conglomeration of ideas, experiences, opinions, prejudices, perspectives and personalities, the aggregate of which form who we are as a child of God in the world.

Years ago, I saw a bumper sticker that said, "*Be patient with me, God is not finished with me yet!*" How true that is for us all. What divides us is often our "unfinished-ness." I will be the first to admit that I have much to learn from you and from others, especially those who bring a decidedly different opinion to the table. My hope and deepest prayer for us and for our country is that we will indeed all stay at the table. We Christians have a bold advantage I believe, and that is each and every week we practice coming to the table together. Staying grounded in God's meal of love shared through the bread and the wine will keep us united in the eternal truth that love will always win, and each of us will be forgiven and fed again and again and again. I miss and love you all this and every day.

May you never forget you are loved.

*Priest Lisa*