Why We Must Protect Marriage

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Marriage: One Man One Woman
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Since the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriages in Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health, reporters have been asking presidential candidates for their comment. Their unresponsive answers reveal their hope that the issue will recede before the 2004 elections.

But the issue won't go away, and every candidate might as well get prepared with a coherent answer. The gay rights lobby smells political victory, and the majority of Americans are digging in to protect a fundamental prop of civilization.

Whining about discrimination, the gay lobby is trying to position the Massachusetts ruling as a logical expansion of the civil rights movement. It isn't.

No one has the right to marry whomever he wants. Gays can already get marriage licenses on exactly the same terms as anyone else.

Everyone is equally barred from marrying another person who is under a certain age, or too closely related, or of the same gender, or already married to another. Sound reasons underlie all these requirements, which apply equally to everyone, male and female.

Goodridge is the anticipated consequence of this year's U.S. Supreme Court decision in Lawrence v. Texas. As Justice Scalia said in dissent, Lawrence "is the product of a law-profession culture, that has largely signed on to the so-called homosexual agenda."

The Massachusetts Supreme Court for a decade has been itching to implement the gay rights agenda. It was the second state supreme court to rule that a lesbian could adopt the biological daughter of her partner, and the first to grant visitation rights to a gay woman who had helped raise her former partner's child.

The media are now accelerating their spin for same-sex marriage even though the Pew survey shows that opposition to same-sex marriage has increased to 59 percent since the Lawrence decision. The New York Times is exulting that "the United States is becoming a post-marital society," creating "new forms of semi-marriages," blurring the lines between marriage and cohabitation, and imitating European types of "Marriage Lite."

Rejecting the claim that the primary purpose of marriage is procreation, the Massachusetts judges pontificated that the history of marriage demonstrates that "it is the exclusive and permanent commitment of the marriage partners to one another, not the begetting of children, that is the sine qua non of marriage." But that argument doesn't justify the court's decision because same-sex relationships are neither exclusive nor permanent.

A recent study of young Dutch homosexual men (reported in the journal "AIDS") found that their relationships, on average, last only one and a half years. The 1984 McWhirter-Mattison study reported in "The Male Couple" that homosexual couples with relationships lasting more than five years incorporated a provision for outside sexual activity.

Traditional marriage is based on the beautiful words "To have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, forsaking all others, to love and to cherish, till death do us part."

After Canada legalized same-sex marriage, there was no rush down the aisle to the altar. Out of 34,200 self-identified homosexual couples, only 1.4 percent obtained marriage licenses. The editor of Fab, a popular gay magazine in Toronto, explained, "I'd be for marriage if I thought gay people would challenge and change the institution and not buy into the traditional meaning of `till death do us part' and monogamy forever."

Gays already have the liberty to live their lives as they choose, set up housekeeping, share income and expenses, make contracts and wills, and transfer property. What they are now demanding is respect and social standing for a lifestyle that others believe is immoral (like mixed-gender cohabiting).

That amounts to the minority forcing its views on the majority. Nobody is entitled to respect for behavior of which we don't approve.

Legalizing same-sex marriage would not merely permit a small number of people to choose alternate lifestyles (they are already doing that). It would force the rest of us to accept a public judgment that personal desire outweighs the value of traditional marriage and outweighs the need of children for mothers and fathers.

If personal desire is to become the only criterion for public recognition of marriage, if equal rights and nondiscrimination require us to be neutral about who is eligible for marriage, how then can we deny marriage to those who want to marry a child, or a sibling, or more than one wife? All those practices are common in some other countries.

If a 13-year-old girl can exercise "choice" to "control her own body" and get an abortion, why can't she have the choice to marry? The Goodridge decision ruled that "the right to marry means little if it does not include the right to marry the person of one's choice."

Marriage must not be changed to mean merely two consenting persons agreeing to share quarters and start applying to the government and to employers for economic benefits. Marriage must continue to be recognized as the essential unit of a stable society wherein husbands and wives provide a home and role models for the rearing of children.