

Faith-Based Foster Agency Wins Unanimous Supreme Court Ruling

In a June 17 victory for religious freedom, the United States Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the city of Philadelphia's refusal to continue its contract with Catholic Social Services violated the agency's First Amendment rights.

The nine justices ruled that Catholic Social Services' biblical values and traditional view of marriage gives it the right to refuse unmarried as well as same-sex couples from its foster and adoption services. The city of Philadelphia had demanded that the agency violate its principles and accept same-sex couples or face termination of its foster care contract.

Rather than violate its values, Catholic Social Services sued the city, and the case worked its way up to the Supreme Court.

Chief Justice Roberts, one of seven justices who is Catholic or went to Catholic schools, wrote for the majority that the foster care agency "seeks only an accommodation that will allow it to continue serving the children of Philadelphia in a manner consistent with its religious beliefs; it does not seek to impose those beliefs on anyone else."

Conservative justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch concurred that Philadelphia issued "an ultimatum to an arm of the Catholic Church: Either engage in conduct that the Church views as contrary to the traditional Christian understanding of marriage or abandon a mission that dates back to the earliest days of the Church—providing for the care of orphaned and abandoned children. ... There can be no doubt that Philadelphia's ultimatum restricts CSS' ability to do what it believes the Catholic faith requires." The three also said

they would have overruled a 1990 Supreme Court decision which, they said, improperly allows limits on religious freedom.

Gorsuch added that the lower court's ruling was in error and that only the Supreme Court could fix it. "Dodging the question today guarantees it will recur tomorrow," he wrote. "These cases will keep coming until the Court musters the fortitude to supply an answer. Respectfully, it should have done so today." {eo}

Follow breaking news like this and more in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.