



## **STORIES OF COURAGE – CHAPTER I**

**"Don't let your 'call' become a profession, for when you do, you lose our prophetic voice."**

***Jimmy Creech, Former Methodist Minister***

**Irish bishop backs same-sex couple rights**

**Ben Townley, [Gay.com U.K.](http://Gay.com U.K.)**

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**A senior Catholic bishop has gone against the pope's recent comments and backed equal rights for lesbian and gay couples.**

**Willie Walsh, Bishop of Killaloe in Ireland, said that, while he has "difficulty" with same-sex marriage, he does not see any problem with civil unions that are similar to the civil partnership bill currently being debated for the United Kingdom.**

**Speaking during a radio interview, Bishop Walsh also said that he did not believe sexual diversity was a sin and that Catholic teachings in the past may well have contributed to homophobia.**

**"I have no difficulty in relation to recognizing the civil liberties of people of homosexual orientation," he told Clare FM, adding that sexual diversity was not a sin or a virtue, but just "a fact."**

**However, he said the institution of marriage was something he could not link to same-sex couples.**

**"I do have a difficulty in relation to marriage. I do believe that marriage is a loving life-long relationship between a man and a woman," he said, according to the Irish Times.**

**The comments come as Ireland's government reportedly looks into offering rights to same-sex couples. The system could well be similar to those available in France and Germany, or to the bill currently passing through Westminster.**

**Belgium and the Netherlands offer full marriage rights to same-sex couples, while Spain is set to offer them in the near future.**

**Walsh's comments will anger other senior members of the Catholic Church, who have repeatedly called for a block on laws giving lesbian and gay people equal rights.**

**Most recently, the pope hit out at "threats" to marriage, preaching chastity as the only "solid hope" in the fight against HIV and gay marriage.**