

Catholic Bishops of Ohio Statement in Support of State Issue 1: The Marriage Protection Amendment

October 5, 2004

The Catholic Bishops of Ohio have issued the following statement encouraging Catholics to support passage of State Issue 1:

On November 2, 2004 Ohio citizens will be asked to vote on an amendment to Ohio's Constitution that will prohibit the legalization of same-sex unions in Ohio. The Catholic Bishops of Ohio support passage of this amendment.

As Bishops, we have addressed the issue of marriage and same-sex unions in various teaching documents at the national level¹. We appreciate the prayerful and conscientious considerations many have given to this issue.

The Catholic Church believes and clearly teaches that marriage is a faithful, exclusive, and lifelong union between one man and one woman, joined as husband and wife in an intimate partnership of life and love. Marriage, whose nature and purposes are established by God, can only be the union of a man and a woman. This truth ought to be recognized as such in law. Marriage is a basic human and social institution. In a manner unlike any other relationship, marriage makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the common good of society, especially through the procreation and education of children. Marriage did not originate from either the church or state, but from God. Therefore, we believe, neither church nor state ought to alter the nature and structure of marriage.

Our defense of marriage must focus primarily on the fundamental importance of marriage for children, families and society, not on homosexuality or other matters. The Church's teaching about the human dignity of every person, including homosexuals, is also clear. Homosexual persons are to be treated with respect and compassion. Our respect for them means we condemn all forms of unjust discrimination, harassment or abuse. Equally recognized is the Church's teaching about the meaning of sexual relations and their place only within the married life of one man and one woman. (cont.)

DEFENDING MARRIAGE

(Ohio Bishops' Statement on Issue 1 Continued)

We encourage all eligible voters to vote on November 2, 2004. In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue and participation in the political process a moral obligation. All believers are called to faithful citizenship, to become informed, active, and responsive participants in the society in which they live. There should be no separation between one's faith and life in either public or private realms. Catholics should act on their beliefs with a well-formed conscience based on Sacred Scripture and Tradition. We should be a community of conscience within society. By our voice and our vote, we should contribute to society's welfare and test its public life by the standards of right reason and Gospel truth. This is particularly urgent in light of the need to defend marriage and to oppose the legalization of same-sex unions as marriages.

Once again, we ask that you vote in favor of State Issue 1 to amend the constitution recognizing marriage as a union only between one man and one woman.

¹ *Promote, Preserve, Protect Marriage*, USCCB Administrative Committee, September 9, 2003; *Between Man and Woman: Questions and Answers About Marriage and Same-Sex Unions*, USCCB, November 12, 2003; *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, USCCB Administrative Committee, November 2003.

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- + The Most Rev. Daniel E. Pilarczyk
Archbishop of Cincinnati
- + The Most Rev. Carl K. Moeddel
Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati
- + The Most Rev. Anthony M. Pilla
Bishop of Cleveland
- + The Most Rev. Martin J. Amos
Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland
- + The Most Rev. Roger Gries
Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland
- + The Most Rev. A. James Quinn
Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland
- + The Most Rev. James A. Griffin
Bishop of Columbus
- + The Most Rev. John Kudrick
Bishop of Byzantine Diocese of Parma
- + The Most Rev. R. Daniel Conlon
Bishop of Steubenville
- + The Most Rev. Leonard P. Blair
Bishop of Toledo
- + The Most Rev. Robert W. Donnelly
Auxiliary Bishop of Toledo
- + The Most Rev. J. Michael Botean
Bishop of Romanian Diocese of Canton
- + The Most Rev. Robert M. Moskal
Bishop of St. Josaphat
- + The Most Rev. Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Youngstown



Ohio Marriage Protection Amendment: Issue 1

Questions and Answers

1. What does the Constitutional Amendment, Issue 1, propose?

The ballot language reads as follows: “Only a union between one man and one woman may be a marriage valid in or recognized by this state and its political subdivisions. This state and its political subdivisions shall not create or recognize a legal status for relationships of unmarried individuals that intends to approximate the design, qualities, significance or effect of marriage.” This amendment will be considered at the November 2nd election. A simple majority vote will decide the outcome of this question about marriage.

2. Why is this amendment being proposed at this time?

An initiative petition drive collected over 500 thousand signatures throughout Ohio to place this issue before voters. The intent is to protect traditional marriage between a man and a woman. Demands are surfacing for recognition of same-sex marriages. The state of Massachusetts has issued marriage licenses to same-sex unions based on a decision by a court in that state.

3. Ohio has a law declaring marriage is only between a man and a woman. Why do we need a constitutional amendment?

In May 2004, Ohio’s Defense of Marriage Act went into effect affirming the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman only and declaring a strong public policy against same-sex marriages or unions. A court can declare this state statute unconstitutional. That is what happened in Massachusetts and the state of Washington. These state’s courts ignored state law similar to Ohio’s Defense of Marriage Act and found a right to same-sex marriage in their state constitutions. Having the Ohio constitution specifically address this issue will help to defend legal challenges against the traditional definition of marriage. Without the protection offered by a constitutional amendment marriage could be redefined with damaging consequences for traditional marriage.

4. How does the Catholic Church understand marriage?

Marriage, as instituted by God, is a faithful, exclusive, lifelong union of a man and a woman joined in an intimate community of love and life.¹ The Catholic Church strongly believes that marriage is a basic human institution and that, though it is regulated by civil laws and church laws, it did not originate from either the church or the state, but from God. Accordingly, we believe that neither church nor the state ought to alter the nature and structure of marriage. Marriage is an interpersonal relationship with public significance. It makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the common good when it fulfills its natural, God-given purposes, namely to bring children into the world and care for them and to provide a way for a man and a woman to seek each other’s welfare in a committed, lifetime relationship.²

5. Would defining marriage as only between one man and one woman impose religious values on others?

No. Our civil laws avoid religious references, but they retain the wisdom of reserving marriage for relations between one man and one woman. This has been the understanding of marriage for many centuries in many different cultures. It is part of the natural moral law available to those who sincerely seek the truth.



¹ Between Man and Woman: Questions and Answers About Marriage and Same-Sex Unions, USCCB, November 2003.

² Letter to Congress, Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, President USCCB, July 2004.

6. The media calls this amendment the “gay marriage ban.” Is that accurate?

No. The amendment simply affirms the centuries old understanding of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. All non-marital relationships are excluded – not just same-sex unions but polygamous ones as well.

7. Recognizing same-sex marriages won’t hurt my marriage. Why should I care?

Marriage cannot be all things to all people and still stand for important values like monogamy and the family. For example, if same sex-marriages were recognized, marriage would no longer be the foundation of the family. If polygamous marriages were recognized, then marriage would no longer promote monogamy. Over time people would come to view marriage as simply a menu of choices. People could switch from one form of marriage to another. Personal whim would replace personal commitment. Marriage would no longer be the firm foundation of the family.

8. Some support civil unions as an alternative to marriage for same-sex unions. Would this harm marriage?

Yes. Civil unions are simply another name for marriages. The term itself – “civil union” – borrows terminology traditionally associated with marriage. Anyone who supports reserving marriage for relationships between one man and one woman should also oppose civil unions. Most of our laws already allow partnerships between adults for inheritance, health and other purposes.

9. Where do the Catholic Bishops of Ohio stand on this Constitutional Amendment?

On October 5, 2004 the Catholic Bishops of Ohio voted unanimously to support passage of Issue 1. Since the institution of marriage did not originate from either the Church or state, but from God, neither the Church nor state ought to alter the nature and structure of marriage. Therefore, as Catholic Bishops we ask all Catholics and others of good will to vote for the approval of Issue 1 on November 2.

For more information, contact the Catholic Conference of Ohio, 9 E Long St., Columbus, Ohio 43215, 614-224-7147, www.ohiocathconf.org

Bulletin Announcement

OHIO BISHOPS ENCOURAGE SUPPORT FOR ISSUE 1: PROTECTING MARRIAGE AMENDMENT

On November 2, 2004 Ohio citizens will be asked to vote on an amendment to Ohio’s Constitution that will prohibit the legalization of same-sex unions in Ohio. The Catholic Bishops of Ohio support passage of this amendment.

The Catholic Church believes and clearly teaches that marriage is a faithful, exclusive, and lifelong union between one man and one woman. Marriage did not originate from either the church or state, but from God. Therefore, neither church nor state ought to alter the nature and structure of marriage. We must promote, preserve and protect this time-tested understanding of marriage.

The Church’s teaching about the human dignity of every person, including homosexuals is also clear. Homosexual persons are to be treated with respect and compassion. Our respect for them means we condemn all forms of unjust discrimination, harassment or abuse. Equally recognized is the Church’s teaching about the meaning of sexual relations and their place only within the married life of one man and one woman.

We encourage all eligible voters to vote on November 2, 2004 and to support Issue 1. We should be a community of conscience within society. By our voice and our vote, we should contribute to society’s welfare and test its public life by the standards of right reason and Gospel truth.



A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

Excerpts from the Summary Statement by the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The Role of the Church

The Church is called to share our social teaching, to highlight the moral dimensions of issues, to participate in debate on public policy, and to witness to the Gospel.

Our community of faith brings several assets to these challenges: *A consistent moral framework* anchored in the Scriptures and expressed in the teaching of the Church; *everyday experience* in educating the young, caring for the sick, sheltering the homeless, feeding the hungry, welcoming refugees, and speaking for those who have no voice; and a *large and diverse community*—Republican, Democrat, and Independent—all called to provide a moral leaven for our democracy and to be the “salt of the earth.”

We urge our fellow citizens to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or self-interest. As bishops, we do not wish to instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates. We hope that voters will examine candidates on the full range of issues and on their personal integrity, philosophy, and performance. A consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework to address issues in the political arena.

For Catholics, the defense of human life and dignity is not a narrow cause, but a way of life. A recent Vatican statement reminds us that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit voting for a political program or law that contradicts fundamental principles of our faith. It also reminds us that we should not isolate a particular element of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church’s social doctrine does not exhaust our responsibility towards the common good.

Moral Priorities for Public Life

Many political issues have important moral dimensions that must be considered. Over the years, we have issued statements applying Catholic social teaching to the public concerns of our day. In Faithful Citizenship, we offer a brief summary of our positions on issues. “Protecting Human Life” begins with our opposition to abortion and euthanasia, which are pre-eminent threats to human life and dignity, and extends to our opposition to cloning, assisted suicide, and the death penalty, and our efforts to promote peace. “Promoting Family Life” focuses on promotion of marriage, parental choice in education, responsible communications, and moral and economic supports for families. “Pursuing Social Justice” requires working for a more just economic life with decent jobs and just wages, providing adequate assistance to poor families, overcoming a culture of violence, combating discrimination, and defending the right to quality health care, housing, and food. “Practicing Global Solidarity” addresses overcoming hunger and global poverty, reducing debt and promoting development, responding to the needs of immigrants and refugees, pursuing peace, and working to reduce regional conflicts in the Middle East, Africa and other parts of the world.

Conclusion

The dual calling of faith and citizenship is at the heart of what it means to be a Catholic in the United States at this time. We urge Catholics to vote and become more involved in public life, to protect human life and dignity and to advance the common good. Faithful citizenship challenges us to seek a place at the table of life for all God’s children in the elections of 2004 and beyond.



Internet Resources: Ohio Elections

As a service towards better understanding the positions and background of various candidates we suggest the following non-partisan informational websites:

Politics 1.com offers links to candidate websites:

- <http://www.politics1.com/oh.htm>

Ohio League of Women Voters offers background information and website links on Congressional and Ohio General Assembly candidates:

- <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/e4/browse/list/?state=OH>

Ohio League of Women Voters along with several other non-partisan groups offers a Guide to 2004 Ohio Supreme Court candidates:

- <http://www.lwvohio.org/voterguide/voterguide.html>

For more information about the group that initiated The Marriage Protection Amendment to amend the state constitution and prohibit legally recognized unions between same-sex partners go to:

- <http://www.ohiomarriage.com/>

The Marriage Law Project headquartered at The Catholic University of America is dedicated to reaffirming the legal definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman through scholarly, legal and educational work. Go to the following website to learn more about this project:

- <http://marriagelaw.cua.edu>

Please refer to the Catholic Conference of Ohio website for more information on this topic.



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