

FLORIDA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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April 14, 2005

Statement of the Florida Bishops

Marriage Is Between One Man and One Woman

1. We, the Catholic Bishops of Florida, join together in support of a state constitutional amendment that defines marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman as husband and wife. We support the proposed constitutional amendment in fidelity to our Catholic faith and our commitment to the common good. The specific language of the amendment is, "Inasmuch as marriage is the legal union of only one man and one woman as husband and wife, no other legal union that is treated as marriage or the substantial equivalent thereof shall be valid or recognized."

2. The witness of sacred scripture and the Catholic tradition teach that marriage, as instituted by God, is between one man and one woman. It is within this covenant of nuptial love that man and woman become one and the gift of children is best received and nurtured. Although Florida law already defines marriage properly, we believe that an amendment to the state constitution is necessary in order to prevent judicial invalidation of the law.

3. The teaching of the Catholic Church is not unique; it is rooted in nature. The gift, meaning and truth of marriage come from creation and are not ours to change. Marriage and family life are fundamental to the moral well being of society. Research and history support the traditional family as the best context for promoting stability and nurturing children. As Pope John Paul II has often said, "As the family goes, so goes the nation!" (Cf. Homily, St. Louis, January 27, 1999)

4. Our support for this proposed constitutional amendment is not motivated by discrimination or animosity toward any group. The Church's teaching about the dignity of homosexual persons is clear. "They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided." (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2358) To uphold God's intent for marriage in which sexual relations have their proper and exclusive place is not to offend the dignity of persons with same sex attraction. Christians must give witness to the whole moral truth and proclaim as immoral all sexual activity outside of true marriage, as well as any unjust actions and hateful attitudes toward homosexual persons.

5. The protection of the institution of marriage is essential to the health and well being of our nation. This is especially important as popular culture, media and entertainment often undermine or ignore the essential role of marriage and promote equivalence between marriage and homosexual relationships.

6. We urge Catholics, and all people of good will who are registered to vote, to sign a petition in favor of allowing this amendment to be voted on in the next general

election. Your support will help preserve the integrity of marriage and family life.

Archbishop John C. Favalora
Archdiocese of Miami

Bishop John J. Nevins
Diocese of Venice

Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ
Diocese of Pensacola/Tallahassee

Bishop Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Bishop Victor Galeone
Diocese of St. Augustine

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito, JCL
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