

# The Florida Catholic

St. Petersburg Edition - Bishop's Lynch's 'Out of the ordinary' column

## Petition drives tackle moral, societal issues

---

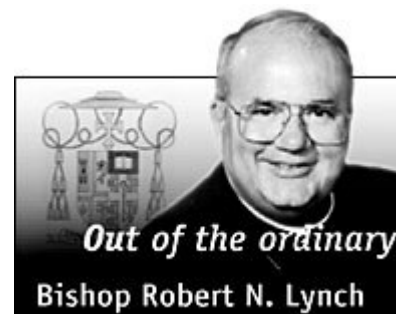
It is a very rare moment when the bishops of a state become involved in seeking signatures for a petition for a ballot referendum. While in advance of elections we often comment and give our advice on issues for which the Florida electorate will be asked to vote, we have rarely become involved in ballot initiatives. Now, however, we are asking your consideration and seeking your signatures for two such constitutional amendments.

The Florida Marriage Amendment would define in the state's constitution that marriage is, for legal and statutory purposes, always between a male and a female. That is the way Florida law presently reads and one might ask why there is then a need for a constitutional amendment.

The simple answer looks down the road to a possible invalidation by one or more arms of the state's judiciary — in other words, a judge or judge(s) may find the present law unconstitutional and make such a future ruling impossible or very difficult. In considering whether or not you will sign the ballot referendum petition, I ask that you seriously consider what is involved in this question and reject the heated rhetoric that often accompanies the question of homosexual unions and "marriages." The Florida Catholic Conference has deliberately chosen not to be a part of any "coalition" in this state. The bishops are undertaking this initiative in part because we believe that the Christian tradition and our sacramental understanding of marriage support the continuation of the definition of marriage as being between male and female.

The second ballot initiative that we are seeking to add to the Florida Constitution is one which would make it impossible for the state of Florida to provide funds for embryonic stem-cell research and cloning. Please understand that the Catholic Church allows, supports and encourages research using adult stem cells. However, our tradition and teaching has always made clear that the human embryo is a form of human life and therefore should not be dismembered or destroyed.

Adult stem-cell research has exceeded all early expectations for success and continues "to yield successful and promising treatments and cures" ("Resolution of the Florida Bishops") and scientists tell us that embryonic stem-cell research is not necessary in the hunt for a cure to Alzheimer's, cancer, Parkinson's Disease, etc. I know that many people, including some famous people, realize this but hold out a hope that somehow a stem-cell line taken from an aborted child (they would, of course, call it a "fetus" to distract us from what is really happening)



would open up new potential avenues for cures. The scientific community mostly agrees with the church that this is not so and therefore embryonic stem-cell research is not necessary.

Because we believe that it would be wrong to use taxpayer money to support research in the destruction of human life, we are asking you to join with us in an effort to see that the Florida Constitution would forever bar the use of public funds for this research. It is both an emotional and complicated issue, but I am convinced that the church is right in taking pre-emptive action in this matter.

The Knights of Columbus and the various diocesan Councils of Catholic Women have agreed to staff tables outside our parish churches in the next few weeks and seek signatures on these two ballot initiatives. I respectfully request that you consider signing these petitions, which will protect the definition of marriage and also protect human life. In order for your signature to count, you must sign one of the petition forms and sign it correctly. You must be a registered voter and you may only sign the two petitions once or they will be ruled invalid by the county Supervisor of Elections.

As I mentioned at the start of this column, this is a very rare request from your bishops and I hope it will always remain rare. But the stakes are high and worth the effort and also worth your prayerful consideration and participation.

**Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch**  
Bishop of St. Petersburg

[Back to Top](#)

Copyright © 1996-2005 *The Florida Catholic* Newspaper - All Rights Reserved  
498 S. Lake Destiny Road, Orlando, FL 32810  
Phone: (407) 660-9141 • Fax: (407) 660-2977 • Toll-Free: 1-888-275-9953