



Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP
MOST REVEREND JOHN C. NIENSTEDT

September 20, 2010

Dear Fellow Catholic,

As the Chief Pastor of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, I am writing to let you know of an important development that, if successful, will profoundly impact families throughout Minnesota, that is, the organized effort to redefine marriage in our state.

During the 2010 legislative session, there have been five bills introduced to redefine marriage from being an institution of one man and one woman for the benefit of children and society, to an institution without gender roles where the desire of individual adults becomes the primary focus.

Throughout history, marriage has always been understood to be the union of a man and a woman. Intuitively, we realize it is the natural way we bring together men and women to conceive and raise the next generation. The complementary nature of the sexes is not only at the heart of the human experience, it is one we can see throughout nature and, more importantly, one that Christ speaks to us about in the Gospel.

Unfortunately, some politicians are attempting to turn marriage into a political issue. They want to legalize "gay marriage" without giving average Minnesotans a say in the debate.

Defining marriage as simply a union of consenting parties will change the core meaning of marriage in the public square for every Minnesotan. At best, so-called same-sex marriage is an untested social experiment and, at worst, it poses a dangerous risk with potentially far-reaching consequences. An exercise of caution should be in order.

Traditional marriage has been the most pro-family, pro-child institution ever conceived. Marriage is the way a man and woman bind their love into a lifelong commitment that is mutual, exclusive, and open to new life—where they promise not only to love each other, but to love any children whom, through God's grace, they create together. Marriage exists in civil law primarily in order to provide communal support for bringing mothers and fathers together to care for their children.

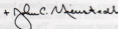
What will happen to children growing up in a world where the law teaches them that moms and dads are interchangeable and that marriage has nothing intrinsically to do with the bearing and raising of children? We know from experience in other states that children as young as first-graders are taught by the government that gay marriage and traditional marriage are both the same, and that the influence of a mother and a father on the development of a child somehow doesn't matter.

Attached is a video that reviews the issues involved in this profound debate. Minnesota is not the first state to grapple with so-called same-sex marriage. Indeed, thirty-one other states have already voted on this important issue. All have voted to preserve traditional marriage.

Whether you agree with the Church's teaching on marriage or not, I hope you will agree that it is the people of Minnesota and not judges or politicians who should decide if we want to redefine marriage in our state. That is why I have called on the Legislature to allow voters to consider a constitutional amendment to preserve marriage as the union between one man and one woman.

I hope you find the attached video informative and helpful, and take the opportunity to discuss it among your family.

Cordially yours in Christ,

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The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt
Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis