



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

A Letter to Catholics in Wisconsin on Defining Marriage in Our State Constitution

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. On November 7, we in Wisconsin will vote on a proposed amendment to our state constitution to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman. We support this amendment and we urge you to join us in doing so.
2. Although Wisconsin law already defines marriage in a way consistent with our Catholic tradition, we believe that an amendment to our state constitution is the prudent thing to do in light of judicial and legislative actions in other states.
3. The witness of scripture and our Catholic tradition teach that marriage, as instituted by God, is between one man and one woman. It is within this unique bond of mutual and reciprocal marital love that a man and a woman become one. This reciprocal love reflects the natural "complementarity" between men and women. This complementarity blends the differences between men and women and enables them to cooperate physically, emotionally and psychologically. Complementarity is truly the gift through which a married couple becomes more than the sum of its parts.
4. We Catholics are not unique in our view of marriage. People of other religions and those who profess no religion have long held the same view. The laws of many nations favor or grant special status to unions between one man and one woman. This reflects a widely shared understanding grounded in the natural law that marriage and family life are fundamental to the moral and social well being of the community.
5. It is true that many children are deeply loved, nurtured and effectively raised in households that differ from the traditional married union. But long experience tells us that families in which a mother and father complement each other provide a uniquely helpful environment for nurturing children to adulthood.
6. Support for this amendment does not imply or justify animosity towards any individual or group. Church teaching regarding the dignity of homosexual persons is clear: "They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in this regard should be avoided." (*Catechism of Catholic Church* #2358) Even as we ask Catholics to support this amendment, we also urge them to repudiate words and deeds that demean individuals with a homosexual orientation. Our support of this amendment has as its only motive the strengthening and defense of marriage, and should not be interpreted as hostility to any group.

7. We urge Catholics to support this proposed amendment to our Wisconsin Constitution when you go to the polls on November 7. As you do so, remember that we are about persuasion, not coercion. Catholics claim no right to force society to heed our teachings on marriage. But we do claim the same right due any citizen to proclaim our values, which contribute to the well being of society and to urge society to affirm them in our public policy. Let us do so with courage, compassion and civility.

+ *Timothy M. Dolan*

The Most Rev. Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of Milwaukee

+ *Robert C. Morlino*

The Most Rev. Robert C. Morlino
Bishop of Madison

+ *David A. Zubik*

The Most Rev. David A. Zubik
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+ *Jerome E. Listecki*

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+ *Raphael M. Fliss*

The Most Rev. Raphael M. Fliss
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