



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AND DEFEND MARRIAGE

### **Why is this amendment needed?**

The amendment is needed to protect the civil institution of marriage, currently codified in Minnesota statutes, from active attempts in the State courts and in the State legislature to redefine it into a system of domestic partnerships or eliminate it altogether. Unlike a statute, a constitutional provision cannot be changed without the permission of voters.

### **Why is the Church promoting a constitutional amendment?**

All citizens, including Catholics, must care about the government's treatment of marriage because civil authorities are charged with protecting children and promoting the common good, and marriage is indispensable to both purposes.

It is a reality that unites a man and a woman and any children born from their union. That is what marriage is; that is what marriage does. Government supports this social reality; it does not create it.

There are many types of loving, committed relationships in our lives that serve a variety of purposes, but we don't call them marriage. That is because *marriage is more*. It is about what kids need, not what adults want.

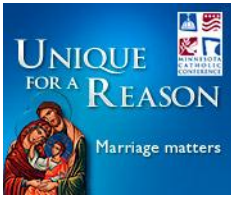
The Minnesota Catholic Conference makes available many resources on its website, <http://mncc.org/issues/marriage>, to help Catholics and the public understand what the civil institution of marriage is and why it is worth defending.

### **Is the Church imposing its view of marriage on others?**

One need not be religious to see the importance of civil marriage to society, nor is the issue of marriage a purely religious or sectarian question. This is not a debate about sacraments, the "sanctity" of marriage, or the private dimensions of people's romantic relationships, but instead civil marriage's essential *public* purposes.

In this debate, the Church is merely offering her insights about what will promote the common good, just as She does on a whole variety of issues: abortion, the economy, migration, education, and poverty. She attempts to speak using points of reference accessible to all people: natural law, social science, experience, history, and tradition. In doing so, the Church shows She is not defending a mere religious doctrine, but a truth that history shows is universal.

People may disagree with the Church's position, but Catholics are not disqualified from public debates merely because what they know by reason is also supported by what they believe God has revealed. To claim otherwise is a radical assault on free speech and an affront to this nation's cherished tradition of religious participation in important political questions, such as the Civil Rights movement.



## **Isn't marriage a civil right?**

Marriage is a civil right, but like every right it has limitations and responsibilities attached to it.

Every man and every woman has a right to enter into marriage, but marriage as an institution can only be between a man and a woman. Governments do not have the power to redefine marriage because it is a permanent human institution that does not owe its existence to governments.

Marrying a person of the same sex is not a civil right because same-sex couples cannot fulfill the core *public* purpose of marriage: bringing men and women into the only kind of union that can naturally make new life and give children mothers and fathers.

## **Is the Church discriminating against gay people?**

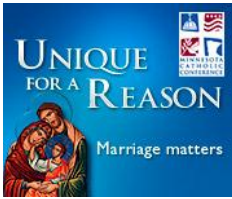
The Church is not targeting any one group by supporting the amendment. The language of the amendment makes this clear. The amendment does not take away anyone's existing rights or legal protections. We are simply defending marriage from attempts to weaken it or turn it into something else. The debate about the meaning of marriage is not one we have started, and we cannot remain silent as this very important institution is under attack.

We recognize that some who oppose a marriage amendment and want to redefine marriage experience same-sex attraction. We do not "hate" them, just like we do not hate those who have divorced or committed adultery or any other sexual sins. All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

We must make a point to remind ourselves that every person has an inherent dignity. Like all other human beings, our brothers and sisters living with same-sex attraction are beloved children of God. As a result, the Catholic Church affirms that they "must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in this regard should be avoided" [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2358].

People with same-sex attraction, like others in society, are productive citizens, loving parents, community servants, good friends, or our beloved family members. Their fundamental human rights must be defended, and everyone must strive to eliminate any forms of injustice, oppression, or violence against all persons.

But our love and compassion for our neighbor does not mean we are compelled to modify important public institutions to satisfy desires or validate relationships. People can live as they choose, but no one has the right to redefine marriage for all of society.



## **What is the Church doing to promote the marriage amendment?**

The bishops have asked pastors in every parish to work with the Minnesota Catholic Conference to form parish committees—similar to their Respect Life and Social Justice committees—to educate Catholics about what marriage is, why it is important, and what the consequences are if it is redefined. In so doing, the Church hopes to equip Catholics to be “faithful citizens” and proactive, respectful participants in the public debate about the future of marriage in Minnesota.

This initiative is being conducted in the spirit of Pope Benedict XVI’s January 19, 2012, exhortation to American bishops in which he called for the formation of lay leaders equipped to advocate in the public square for just policies that promote human dignity and the common good.

The parish committee efforts undertaken in this regard should focus on prayer, educational activities, and events, as well as opportunities to put faith in action through the political process. It is hoped that groups such as the Knights of Columbus, Council of Catholic Women, Respect Life, and Sowers of Justice committees will assist the pastor in coordinating activities, and that efforts to rebuild a healthy culture of marriage and family life, inside and outside our parish communities, will continue long after the November election.

The Church recognizes that many Catholics struggle with or misunderstand Catholic teaching on marriage and same-sex attraction. She does not, nor seeks to, coerce the consciences of the faithful. Instead, She simply wishes to serve as a guide to aid in the process of forming consciences so that the lay faithful may exercise their public duties responsibly. The Church only proposes; She imposes nothing.

## **Is the Church working with other communities to support the marriage amendment?**

Yes. The Church actively supports and collaborates with the Minnesota for Marriage campaign, a broad coalition of religious and secular groups committed to defending the institution of marriage in Minnesota. To learn more about the campaign, visit: <http://www.minnesotafor marriage.com>.

## **What can Catholics do to defend marriage?**

Catholics can put their faith in action by working with their pastor or parish committees, the activities of which are being supported by the Minnesota Catholic Conference. If a parish committee does not exist in a parish, parishioners can start one. Similarly, Catholics can volunteer their time with the Minnesota for Marriage campaign.

Because it takes money to speak in a democracy, Catholics are also encouraged to make a donation to Minnesota for Marriage, even in small amounts. Donations can be made through <http://www.minnesotafor marriage.com>.

Catholics should also pray for the success of the amendment, for those involved, and that our message may fall on receptive ears. Most importantly, Catholics should witness to the truth of marriage by living their own marriages well and helping others do the same. Ultimately, it is not enough to pass a marriage amendment. We must truly rebuild a culture of marriage and family life.