

For Immediate Release
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State's bishops call marriage foundation of family, society

Statement to Catholic people calls for compassion, reaffirms church's teaching, rejects legal redefinition of marriage

(SEATTLE) In their pastoral statement regarding Referendum 74, the bishops of Washington State said the effort to redefine marriage is partly born of "historic patterns of injustice toward persons with same-sex attraction," and reaffirmed their commitment to defend the dignity of every person. The statement sent to parishes across the state also affirmed that marriage can only be between a man and woman.

Titled "Marriage and the Good of Society," the statement noted that voter approval of the law passed by the state Legislature and signed by the governor earlier this year would not result in any new legal rights for couples of the same-sex.

"No matter how well-intentioned," the statement said, "the effort to redefine marriage in civil law to include people of the same sex will not serve the good of society because it would detach marriage from its essential character and purpose."

The statement was signed by the four bishops of Washington state: Archbishop J. Peter Sartain, Seattle; Bishop Blase Cupich, Spokane; Bishop Joseph Tyson, Yakima; and Seattle Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo.

Marriage and Children

Referendum 74 gives voters an opportunity to approve or reject the law redefining marriage as "a civil contract between two persons." If approved by voters, the new definition would legalize marriage for same-sex couples in Washington beginning Dec. 6.

The bishops said their support for traditional marriage is motivated by concern that the new law would separate marriage from procreation and the right of children to be raised by their mothers and fathers. The good of society is served when faithful, monogamous marriages between one man and one woman are the legally-established social standard for uniting children with their parents, they said.

Marriage Law and Religious Liberty

The bishops also expressed concern that the new law would have a chilling effect on religious liberty by making it discriminatory for public and private institutions to promote the unique value of children being raised by their biological mothers and fathers.

“No institution or individual could propose that married mothers and fathers provide a singular benefit to children without being accused of discrimination,” the bishops said, citing recent attacks on churches, businesses and nonprofit organizations that object to the redefinition of marriage.

“Those who uphold families based on the permanent, faithful relationship between a married man and woman as the best environment for raising children already have been accused of hate speech,” the statement said.

The bishops also made reference to religious institutions, including the Catholic Church, that have been forced to suspend ministries such as adoptions and foster care because of conscientious objections to same-sex marriage. The statement asked that Catholic people uphold the church’s consistent teaching on marriage and said that the bishops “reject the redefinition of marriage as a ‘civil contract between two persons.’”

The statement was released by the Washington State Catholic Conference, which represents the Catholic bishops of Washington State.

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