

February 12, 2010

Dear Representative

Today I write to you on behalf of the Minnesota Catholic Bishops to voice our opposition to Senate File 341 and its companion, House File 454. These are bills that attempt to establish a definition of "domestic partner" as equivalent to marriage. As we have stated in the past, the Minnesota Catholic Bishops oppose any and all legislative or judicial attempts to accord same-sex unions the equivalent status and rights of marriage, by referencing them as marriage, civil unions or any similar nomenclature.

Our faith teaches that marriage is a faithful, exclusive and lifelong union between one man and one woman, joined in an intimate community of life and love. Marriage is a basic human and social institution. No other form of relationship between persons can be considered an equivalent to this natural relationship.

It is not unjust to deny the same rights accorded to husband and wife to "domestic partners" because marriages and "domestic partnerships" are essentially different realities. In fact, justice requires society to do so. To uphold God's intent for marriage, in which sexual relations have their proper and exclusive place, is not to offend the dignity of people who are homosexual. As Catholics, we must give witness to the whole moral truth and oppose as immoral both homosexual acts and unjust discrimination against people who are homosexual.

The Catholic Church is committed to promoting the essential role of marriage in its teaching, preaching and public policy advocacy at both the state and national levels, and in the important dialogue about how best to protect marriage and the common good in our society as a whole. We are called to oppose any efforts to grant "domestic partners" the same benefits, rights and privileges accorded to husbands and wives, because "domestic partnerships," do not express full human complementarity and because they are inherently non-procreative. Senate File 341: amends the state and municipal tort claims law to include wrongful death notices by a surviving "domestic partner"; amends the general wrongful death statute to provide for wrongful death actions by surviving "domestic partners"; modifies the statute establishing priorities for the disposition of a deceased person to add a "domestic partner" of the decedent in the list of priorities, after a spouse; and defines the term "domestic partners."

"Domestic partnerships" contradict the nature of marriage for several reasons. First, domestic partnerships are not based on the natural complementarity of male and female. Second, domestic partnerships cannot cooperate with God to create new life. Finally, the natural purpose of a sexual union cannot be achieved by a "domestic partnership." Persons in "domestic partnerships" cannot enter into a true conjugal union. Therefore, it is wrong to equate "domestic partnerships" to marriage.

Neither church nor state can alter the basic meaning and structure of marriage. Marriage, whose nature and purposes are established by God, can only be the union of a man and a woman and must remain such in law. In a manner unlike any other relationship, marriage makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the common good of society, especially through the procreation and education of children. The union of husband and wife becomes, over a lifetime, a great good for themselves, their family, communities, and society. Marriage is a gift to be cherished and protected. Though it is regulated by civil laws and church laws, marriage did not originate from either the church or state, but from God.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to oppose Senate File 341/House File 454.

Peter Noll
Public Policy Director