



MARRIAGE AMENDMENT BACKGROUNDER (FALL 2011)

“In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation.... Even those who cannot vote should raise their voices on matters that affect their lives and the common good.”

– USCCB’s *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 2007

The Issue

In spring 2011, MCC lobbied successfully to have a constitutional amendment placed on the November 2012 ballot that declares: **“Only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota.”** The Amendment prevents the vital institution of civil marriage from being redefined by either politicians or the courts.

Why Promote a Constitutional Marriage Amendment

Minnesota bishops have promoted a state marriage amendment over the years because of the state’s many attempts to redefine traditional marriage, the basic building block of civil society. Given the inherent connection between families, the well-being of children and the good of society, it is natural that the state supports and endorses traditional marriage in its laws.

Civil marriage exists in law because all cultures throughout history realized that marriage between one man and one woman provides the most stable environment in which to raise children and keeps biological parents connected to their children. While death and divorce too often prevent it, we know children do best when raised in an intact home by their mother and father. In other words, traditional, natural marriage fosters strong community – or, the Common Good.

Catholic Social Teaching: What is Marriage?

In a 2010 joint statement about marriage, the bishops reminded us that: *“As a sacred institution, marriage is a constant reminder of God’s love for the human race, as well as a reflection of the permanent, faithful, and fruitful bond of love between Christ and the Church. (See Genesis 1:27, 2:22-24; Ephesians 5:31-32)”*

- **Jesus was born and lived in a concrete family and was nurtured by a married mother and father.** He conferred the highest dignity on the institution of marriage, making it a sacrament of the new covenant (cf. Matthew 19:3-9). Enlightened by this message, Catholic teaching considers the family the first natural society and places it as the center of social life — where we learn to love others and live the virtues necessary to be good and productive members of our communities.
- **The roles of mother and father in raising a child are equally important and indispensable.** Mary and Joseph were equal in dignity yet their relationship was fundamentally rooted in difference. A family founded on the mutual self-giving of one man and one woman is the bedrock of civil society. It models for all of us the value and respect that *both* men and women should be afforded in our broader communities. As Blessed John Paul II reminds us, authentic, strong marriage is where boys and girls “develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny.”

About MCC

Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC) coordinates the Catholic Church’s non-partisan lobbying and public policy activities on behalf of the bishops of Minnesota. The Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teaching of His Church guide our work which, through relationships with representatives and agencies of Minnesota government:

- analyzes the moral dimension of public policies;
- proclaims the sanctity of life and dignity of the human person;
- leads decision makers in reaching just solutions;
- and, provides opportunities for Catholics in Minnesota to carry out their responsibility to participate in political life.

For more Marriage Amendment Resources, including information on how to get involved, FAQs, teaching resources, videos and academic papers, please visit MCC’s Marriage & Family page: <http://mncc.org/issues/marriage/>.