

A Letter from the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey

February 11, 2007

Dear Friends in Christ:

Recently, Governor Jon Corzine signed the Civil Union Act that gives same sex couples the legal right to all of the benefits and responsibilities of marriage. We, the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey, are concerned that the Civil Union Act not undermine the institution of marriage as a union between one man and one woman. This is critical as marriage is the foundation of the family. The family, in turn, is the basic unit of society.

Marriage as a union of one man and one woman has its roots not only in human tradition and history, but also in natural law, which transcends all man-made law. Marriage is a natural institution. Marriage is distinct in essence from every other arrangement because marriage is always between a man and a woman.

The Catholic Church celebrates the covenant of marriage as a sacrament. As teachers, the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey point to both the Old Testament and the New Testament where the definition of marriage as a union between one man and one woman is clear:

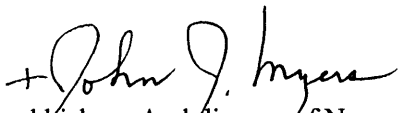
That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body. (Genesis 2:24)


And in the New Testament, Jesus teaches that marriage is a union between one man and one woman:

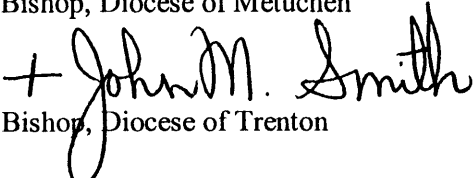
Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh... (Matthew 19:5-6)

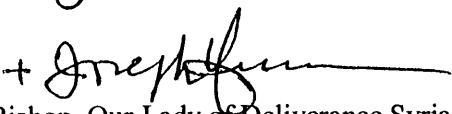
At this important moment, when some are attempting to change the definition of marriage, we have designated February 11th as a day to celebrate the great sacrament of marriage. We also have designated February 25th as a day of special prayer for the preservation of marriage. In addition to praying, we urge all Catholics to reach out to their neighbors, legislators and the Governor with the simple message: "Preserve the definition of marriage as a union between one man and one woman."

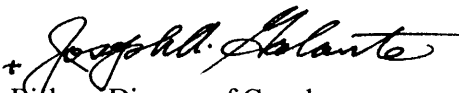
May God bless you.

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Archbishop, Archdiocese of Newark

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Bishop, Diocese of Metuchen

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Bishop, Diocese of Trenton

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Bishop, Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Diocese

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Bishop, Diocese of Camden

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Bishop, Diocese of Paterson

Bishop, Byzantine Catholic
Eparchy of Passaic