



The Union of One Man and One Woman
Bishops of Florida Support 2008 Amendment 2 - Marriage Protection

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As teachers and pastors, we seek to educate Florida's Catholic faithful on the true nature and meaning of marriage as established by God and honored by Catholic teaching and tradition.

In the beginning, the Lord showed us in scripture his plan for marriage as the joining of a man and a woman. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

Marriage between the baptized is a sacrament, a sacred bond of husband and wife publicly witnessed in a church in the presence of the Lord. The sacrament of Matrimony gives spouses the grace to love each other with the same love Christ has for his Church. This grace perfects the couple's love and strengthens their indissoluble unity. From a valid marriage arises a perpetual and exclusive bond between the spouses. It is within this nuptial covenant that a man and a woman remain open to fertility and the gift of children is received and nurtured.

The common good and the future of our society are served best through the natural order of a union of a man and a woman. Research and history support the traditional family as the best environment to nurture and raise healthy children who thrive both physically and emotionally. "...the union of life and love based on the marriage between a man and a woman, which constitutes the family, is an indispensable good for society as a whole and must not be confused or likened to other types of unions". (Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Participants in the Forum of Family Associations, May 16, 2008)

Amendment 2 on the November 2008 ballot states, "*In as much as marriage is the legal union of only one man and one woman as husband and wife, no other legal union that is treated as marriage or the substantial equivalent thereof shall be valid or recognized.*" This amendment to the Florida Constitution affirms Florida's existing marriage law (Section 741.212 FS) and protects marriage as currently defined in law from being negated or overturned by legislative process or judicial ruling.

The Church's teaching about marriage, "ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1601), is clear. Our support for this proposed constitutional amendment is not motivated by discrimination or animosity toward any group. The amendment does not affect benefits offered or contracted in the private sector. Health care and government benefits currently being received by individuals, including seniors, will not be impacted. Through proper legal consultation for estate planning, health and end-of-life care, family members or others may be granted many of the same rights and privileges available to a spouse.

In view of the above, we support Amendment 2.

Archbishop John C. Favalora
Archdiocese of Miami

Bishop Victor Galeone
Diocese of St. Augustine

Bishop Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Diocese of Orlando

Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ
Diocese of Pensacola/Tallahassee

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito
Diocese of Palm Beach

Bishop Frank J. Dewane
Diocese of Venice

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe J. Estevez
Archdiocese of Miami

Auxiliary Bishop John G. Noonan
Archdiocese of Miami