

## **MCC Statement In Support of the Defense of Marriage Act**

to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary,

Massachusetts General Court,

Tuesday, May 18, 1999

My name is John McNamara. I am Bishop of the Merrimack Region of the Archdiocese of Boston. I am here representing the Massachusetts Catholic Conference.

The Catholic tradition on the subject of the definition of marriage is simple to state. Marriage is a partnership of one man and one woman who are joined together for their own mutual good and for the procreation and education of children.

It is important to state at the outset that we are here to defend and support this ancient definition of marriage. We are not here to attack the honor or motivation of those who do not agree.

I wish to briefly make four points:

1. This definition of marriage is as old as civilization. The family is the basic unit of society. The family is the first institution created within the human race. It is profoundly significant throughout human history in the East as well as the West, this ancient definition of marriage has never been challenged. It is a radical innovation to attack this definition of marriage. It is most unwise to alter this definition of marriage which has been held always and everywhere in civilized society.

2. This definition is taught and proclaimed by all the major religions of the world. Whatever concepts divide religions, on this subject of the definition of marriage, there is total unanimity. I point to the story of Adam and Eve and the creation of the family the first story of that Scripture, shared in common by Jewish and Christian communities.

3. The State has a compelling interest in this definition of marriage. For

biological, psychological and social reasons, the family is essential to the harmony and development of society and, indeed, the State has always protected marriage and the family as traditionally defined. The State does not have compelling interest in protecting a new definition which would define marriage as, for example, the sexual and emotional union of any two adults. There is much sociological evidence that two men do not model motherhood for children anymore than two women model fatherhood for children

4. Legal developments in other states, particularly Vermont, necessitate the adoption of a clear expression of public policy in Massachusetts regarding the definition of marriage. A court challenge in Vermont, for example, seeks to expand the definition of marriage in that State to enable couples other than a man and woman, including couples from other states, to receive marriage licenses. Unless Massachusetts law expressly limits the definition of marriage, then Massachusetts authorities will have to recognize marriage licenses issued in other states even if the relationship is not between a man and a women.

While the right of a man and a woman to marriage is a revered freedom, the right to define marriage as anything other than the relation between a man and a woman lacks any support in the traditions of all cultures, in the traditions of major world religions and in the annals of history.

As Pope John Paul II has recognized . . . "with the pretext of giving attention to protecting the family and all families, one forgets that there is a model loved and blessed by God, the conjugal relationship of man and woman. At the same time, one tries to introduce other forms of unions ot couples contrary to the initial plan of God for the human race. In this way, the rights of the family are turned upside down threatening society at its very foundation."