

Oral Testimony offered in House Civil Justice Committee on February 22, 2010

Chairman Mullery and members, my name is Fr. Michael Becker, Formator-Spiritual Director at Saint John Vianney College Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on behalf of the Minnesota Catholic Bishops to voice their opposition to House File 893, House File 999, and House File 1740. These are bills that attempt to establish a definition of same-sex unions as equivalent to marriage. As stated many times before, 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 the like.

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.

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. Marriage between one man and one woman forms the nucleus of society, the strong and secure environment in which healthy children can be reared. In turn, healthy children are able to contribute to the common good of society. Thus, it is in the best interest of the state to protect the institution of marriage as a fundamental building block of culture.

Same-sex unions contradict the nature of marriage for several reasons. First, same-sex unions are not based on the natural complementarity of male and female. Second, same-sex relationships 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 or same-sex unions 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 the Catholic Bishops' request to oppose legislation that would promote same-sex unions as the equivalent of marriage in Minnesota.