

MASSACHUSETTS CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
WEST END PLACE

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BISHOPS' STATEMENT

DATE: To Be Read At All Weekend Masses November 29-30, 2003

The recent ruling of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court which radically redefines marriage is a national tragedy. By their action the justices who have decreed this have set the stage to erode even further the institution of marriage as a human reality which the State should protect and strengthen for the good of society.

We hope that all citizens will come to recognize what is at stake and work to ensure that marriage as the fundamental institution of society will be safeguarded. The misguided decision has also served to promote divisions in society by villainizing as bigotry the legitimate defense of thousands of years of tradition. It is not the intention of the Catholic community to infringe on the civil rights of homosexuals or anyone else. Our opposition to a redefinition of marriage is to safeguard the institution of marriage for future generations. Marriage is a gift of God which in its natural order allows for the growth of the human family and society. It is not just one life-style choice among many. The generations to come are the ones whose rights are being violated by the Court. Changing the definition of marriage in the long run will seriously harm family life. The deleterious effects of the court's ruling are compounded by the directive to implement its decision in 180 days. This time frame is a sure formula for chaos. It denies the citizens of Massachusetts any real opportunity to respond reasonably. Every effort must be made to extend the stay beyond the 180 days mandated by the court.

Ultimately, we advocate a constitutional amendment that reaffirms marriage as the union between one man and one woman. Thirty-seven states have already enacted legislation to protect the definition of marriage. We ask everyone to contact the Governor and their state legislators to urge them to find a way to give our citizens more time to deal with this issue.

In the coming weeks, our diocesan newspapers, the Massachusetts Catholic Conference through its website and MCC-Net alerts, and your church bulletins will provide more information about the ways you can help. It is vital to stay informed.

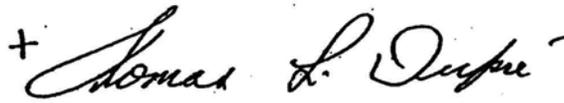
This is a serious challenge that confronts us. Thank you for listening and may God continue to bless you.

Handwritten signature of Sean P. O'Malley in black ink, starting with a cross symbol.

Archbishop
Archdiocese of Boston

Handwritten signature of Daniel P. Reilly in black ink, starting with a cross symbol.

Diocese of Worcester

Handwritten signature of Thomas L. Duque in black ink, starting with a cross symbol.

Bishop
Diocese of Springfield

Handwritten signature of George W. Coleman in black ink.

Bishop
Diocese of Fall River