

For Immediate Release  
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The following letter is being read to parishioners of the Roman Catholic Diocese during Masses this weekend:

**Dear Parishioners:**

**Earlier this week a group of ministers held a press conference in various parts of the state urging Maine people to embrace same-sex marriage in the name of equal civil rights. No doubt you read about it in the paper or viewed the story on television.**

**To claim that marriage is a civil right open to all forms of relationships is a misnomer. Marriage is an institution that predates civilization, ordained by God, and exclusive to one man and one woman who are given the responsibility to procreate the human race, and to nurture, educate, and pass on shared values and mores to their offspring. To redefine marriage to include same-sex couples is to strip marriage of an essential component, namely the ability and obligation to procreate. To strip marriage of this essential component is to render marriage meaningless and open it up to endless revision and redefinition.**

**Marriage, for us as Catholic-Christians, is a Holy Sacrament, a vocation and a vehicle to salvation. However, our objections to same-sex marriage in the public square are based not only on religious tenets but also on human reason and the good of society at-large. Marriage, as we know it, has been preserved, rewarded, and recognized by the state in numerous ways because the state has long recognized the foundational nature of traditional marriage to the good of a nation and entire civilizations. To support and encourage strong families is to support the building of a healthy and productive societal structure that is best equipped to raise and rear children.**

**Some would suggest that we are being unfair and unkind in refusing to accept same-sex marriage. That simply is not the case. We have been unwavering in our support for a number of changes, to what was once known as spousal benefits, which have made hospital visitation rights available to a wider spectrum of individuals, opened up opportunities for one household member to share health insurance benefits with another, and so on. These major changes were supported in the interest of preserving basic human rights for every person. Marriage does not fall into this**

**category because by its very nature, those who commit to it must be of different sexes as a fundamental prerequisite.**

**Marriage is being challenged throughout the country. Recent elections in California, Florida and Arizona all resisted efforts to expand the definition of marriage. However, many more challenges are expected in the year ahead. We can expect a same-sex initiative in Maine in the near future. We must work together to preserve marriage for the good of our society. In the weeks and months ahead, you will hear more about our own initiatives not only to preserve marriage but to enhance it and support it in all ways possible. Naturally, we will continue to speak out on issues which threaten the basic dignity and human rights of all individuals, regardless of their age, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation; however, we can never do so at the cost of compromising those eternal, fundamental truths as handed on to us in our faith tradition as well as the natural law.**

**Please refer often to our diocesan web site for updates and more information on this topic.**

**Yours sincerely in Christ,  
Most Rev. Richard J. Malone  
Bishop of Portland**