

Archdiocesan Update - Vol 34 No 12 (December 2011)

FROM THE ARCHBISHOP

At our recent Clergy Study Day on October 19, I gave the following talk. I offer it here again for those who were not in attendance:

My dear brothers, I do not believe it is an exaggeration to say that in this movement to protect and defend the definition of marriage as a union between one man and one woman we are faced with one of the greatest challenges of our times. None of us can deny that the institution of marriage and family life are unraveling before our very eyes due to no-fault divorce, wide-spread cohabitation and promiscuous sexual activity. The end game of those who oppose the marriage amendment that we support is not just to secure certain benefits for a particular minority, but, I believe, to eliminate the need for marriage altogether. This can only lead to continued destabilizing the family unit itself. Both those realities will happen if marriage is redefined or, perhaps better put, "undefined." Today we can say with clarity what the natural reality of marriage is. That may not be possible in years to come if we fail to be successful now. As I see it, we have this one chance as Minnesotans to make things right. The stakes could not be higher.

We did not choose this challenge nor do any of us relish the confrontation it will bring, but neither can we remain silent in order to get along. We must witness to the truth so as to realize the common good of our society. While the greatest good is surely life with God in heaven, we must, in truth, seek to foster the good here on earth. And we are not the first to confront this task, our brothers in California, Maine, Hawaii among others, have all taken up this defense and have been successful in doing so.

In doing so, we must never vilify or caricaturize those who argue otherwise. Indeed, we must acknowledge that all men and women are God's sons and daughters. But it is this very truth and the fact that the truth is one and bears no contradiction that the Church and her ministers must witness here and now.

It is my expectation that all the priests and deacons in this Archdiocese will support this venture and cooperate with us in the important efforts that lie ahead. The gravity of this struggle, and the radical consequences of inaction propels me to place a solemn charge upon you all—on your ordination day, you made a promise to promote and defend all that the Church teaches. I call upon that promise in this effort to defend marriage. There ought not be open dissension on this issue. If any have personal reservations, I do not wish that they be shared publically. If anyone believes in conscience that he cannot cooperate, I want him to contact me directly and I will plan to respond personally.

I see our united effort as a part of the New Evangelization, that of building a new culture for marriage. You know, this effort to pass a constitutional amendment is not an end in itself. We began a year ago to host 25 seminars across the Archdiocese to explain why marriage is what it is and why we believe in it.

Presently, I have appointed teams of a priest and a married couple to go into each of our Catholic high schools to address the topic of marriage.

I want the focus here to be a positive one—let's celebrate the reality of what God designed from the beginning as affirmed in the first chapter of Genesis and that Jesus reaffirmed in the 19th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel.

I am actively raising funds to assist in this educational endeavor. And if you and your parish wish to benefit from these programs, please let me know.

I thank you for your support. I count on your prayer. Be assured you have the same from me. Together, let us turn to our Blessed Mother—mother of all families, Mother of the Church and patroness of the new evangelization. Through her maternal intercession, our Lady will secure for us that which is needed most in these days—protection, wisdom and peace through the grace of her Son and Savior, Jesus Christ.

May God bless us all.

With every good wish, I remain

Fraternally yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt  
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis