



CONFERENCE CALL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MARYLAND CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

FALL 2005

Maryland Catholics Urged to Weigh In On Same-Sex Marriage, Minimum Wage

Maryland's three diocesan bishops are encouraging the clergy and laity of their respective dioceses to help prevent legislation that applies marriage-like status to same-sex relationships from becoming law.

In co-signed letters sent to Maryland clergy earlier this month, Baltimore Cardinal William H. Keeler, Washington Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick and Wilmington Bishop Michael A.

Saltarelli call for a statewide education initiative that features the in-parish distribution of a "preserving-marriage" pastoral statement and a letter addressed to the state's Catholic laity. The letter asks lay Catholics to exhort their legislators to uphold Governor Robert L. Ehrlich's vetoes of bills that would grant state certification to same-sex "life partnerships" and "domestic partnerships."

A similar in-parish education campaign, encouraging Catholics to call for the General Assembly's override Ehrlich's veto of minimum-wage legislation, will be launched later in the fall.

Lawmakers will decide the same-sex and minimum-wage matters immediately following the January 11 start of the Maryland General Assembly's 2006 session.

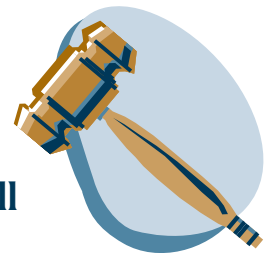
Diocesan Bishops Ask Catholics To Support Traditional Marriage In Contacts with Lawmakers

The leaders of Maryland's three Roman Catholic dioceses have endorsed a grassroots advocacy campaign aimed at preserving traditional marriage.

In a letter addressed to the Maryland Catholic laity, the diocesan bishops of Baltimore, Washington, and Wilmington call for contacts with state lawmakers that urge them to sustain Governor Robert L. Ehrlich's vetoes of bills that would grant state certification to same-sex relationships. The measures, granting marriage status in a variety of matters currently reserved to married men and women and their families, were approved by both houses of the state legislature during its 2005 session. The ACLU and gay-and-lesbian advocacy groups are encouraging lawmakers to override the governor's vetoes. House and Senate votes on the question will occur during the first hours of the 2006 session, which begins January 11.

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Override Effort Targets Governor Ehrlich's Veto of Minimum-Wage Bill



At the same time as Maryland Catholics are being asked to encourage lawmakers to sustain Governor Ehrlich's vetoes of same-sex "marriage" legislation, they are being urged to push for the override of a gubernatorial veto that would deny low-income workers an additional \$1.00 in hourly wages.

Legislation to raise the state's minimum wage from its current \$5.15-an-hour level passed both houses of the General Assembly by comfortable margins last spring. In vetoing the bill, Ehrlich said the increase would have an untoward impact on business. The Maryland Catholic Conference was the measure's principal interest-group proponent.

"Our argument," said the Conference's Julie Varner, "addressed society's moral obligation to ensure opportu-

Continued on back cover

Maryland's Nonpublic Schools Join Forces to Secure New BOAST Maryland Tax Credit

An energetic new coalition representing Maryland's Catholic school community and a broad range of other nonpublic schools has launched a legislative campaign for families struggling to afford their children's education. The initiative focuses on a new business income tax credit (in addition to a charitable deduction) for donations to scholarship organizations. The BOAST Maryland Tax Credit (Building Opportunities for All Students and Teachers in Maryland) is modeled on a highly successful program in Pennsylvania that has raises more than \$27 million a year for nonpublic-school scholarships.

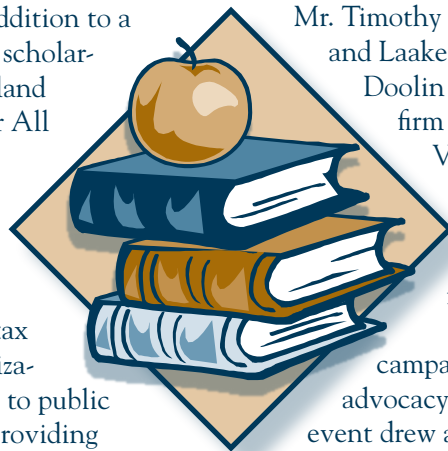
The program also would provide tax credits for business donations to organizations providing extracurricular support to public school students, and to organizations providing support to public and nonpublic K-12 teachers. "The BOAST Maryland tax credit is built on the recognition that high quality, affordable educational options are vital to ensuring that Maryland is an attractive place to live and do business," said Mary Ellen Russell, the Conference's associate director for education.

The state's business community is enthusiastic about the proposal and its potential to strengthen the partnership between Maryland's business and educational communities. Under the chairmanship of Mr. John Erickson, President and CEO of Erickson Retirement Communities, a growing partnership of business leaders has formed to lend support to the campaign to win General Assembly approval. Charter

members of the partnership include Mr. J. Paul McNamara, Vice President of United Bank in Bethesda; Mr. Tom Gildee, President of Kids-R-VIPS Foundation in Baltimore; Mr. Martin McGehrin, Vice President and Financial Advisor at Merrill Lynch, Annapolis; Mr. Timothy F. Maloney, of the Joseph, Greenwald, and Laake law firm in Greenbelt; Mr. Devin Doolin of the Furey, Doolin and Abell law firm in Chevy Chase; Ms. Toni Keiser, Vice President for Public Affairs at Atlantic General Hospital, Berlin; and Mr. Ed Rommel, a partner at Twilley, Rommel & Stephens, P.A. in Salisbury.

The BOAST Maryland legislative campaign kicked off with a September advocacy training session in Annapolis. The event drew a crowd of enthusiastic participants from nonpublic schools across the state. The program included a motivating presentation on Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit delivered by Mr. Andrew LeFevre, executive director of the REACH Foundation, Pennsylvania's leading school choice advocacy organization. Following an overview of Maryland's BOAST tax credit proposal, participants received training on how to identify and communicate with their legislators, and how to get their school communities involved in the legislative process.

The Maryland Nonpublic Schools Legislative Coalition has launched a website at www.mdnonpubs.org, and has planned a series of informational sessions on the tax credit for early November.



Conference Call

FALL 2005

Newsletter of the
Maryland Catholic Conference

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Marriage—Continued from cover

"It seems clear," the diocesan bishops' letter says, "that only the insistence of a well-informed, properly motivated electorate can prompt lawmakers to do the right thing."

Pastors are being asked to have the letter read from the pulpit, and to include in parish bulletins a bishops' pastoral statement entitled "Preserving Marriage: The Union of One Man and One Woman." [A copy of the statement is included in this issue of *Conference Call*.] Each of the documents contains directions for contacting one's state senator and delegates, learning how they voted on the same-sex bills, and urging them in January to vote to sustain the Ehrlich vetoes.

Preserving Marriage: The Union of One Man and One Woman

A Pastoral Letter from the Catholic Bishops of Maryland

The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its own special laws by the Creator. By its very nature it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised Marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament.

—Catechism of the Catholic Church

Maryland law acknowledges that marriage is the union of one man and one woman. But the law does not protect against activist judges who would overturn it. It does not protect against state legislators who seek to give legal recognition to same-sex unions and endow such relationships with the status, rights and privileges of marriage. Two recent developments highlight this concern:

There was a coordinated effort of same-sex couples applying for marriage licenses in various jurisdictions throughout Maryland. The licenses were denied and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) immediately filed suit on behalf of these couples.

Lawmakers recently approved bills that are seen as stepping stones of a well-organized effort to recognize same-sex marriages in Maryland by progressively awarding marriage rights to same-sex couples. The Governor appropriately vetoed these bills, but there is great concern that his veto will be overridden. The ACLU and gay-and-lesbian advocacy groups are working to convince lawmakers to override the veto when they return to Annapolis in January for their 2006 session.

Faced with these developments, it is clear that the preservation of marriage as the union of one man and one woman requires legislation (perhaps even an amendment to our state's constitution) that provides the strongest possible support for marriage and families. It also requires lawmakers dedicated to preserving traditional marriage. And so we come to you in this statement to enlist your support for the sanctity and societal significance of marriage, and to encourage your involvement in advocacy efforts to ensure the preservation of marriage in our state's public policy.

The marriage of one man and one woman is at the very core of our Church, our people and our teaching. Marriage is a natural, human institution that precedes any social or legal system; it is as old as humanity because it flows from the natural complementarity and sexual differentiation and attractions of man and woman. Complementarity means that differences between the sexes enable them to cooperate physically, psychologically and emotionally in the formation of a complete whole. The union of man and woman in a permanent and

exclusive way has been part of the natural reality of life from the beginning.

If we look at marriage as something different from the union of one man and one woman, we essentially change the societal equation—we reject the rationale for marriage altogether, turning it into just one more alternative lifestyle, one more partnership option, one more contract. This falsely concedes that marriage and married couples do not make a unique contribution to the human community. Marriage is essential to the continuation of the human race and to the dignity, stability, peace, and prosperity of the family and society. Any attempt to redefine marriage in a way that includes same-sex relationships should be viewed as an assault on these inherent characteristics and an assault on the common good.

Increasingly, many elected leaders and other opinion makers have placed an exaggerated emphasis on individual preferences and conveniences and, to the detriment of society, have elevated these personal preferences to the level of rights and entitlements. Thus, the taking of innocent human life is regularly touted as the “right” of choice and, thus, the termination of a life considered no longer useful is frequently characterized as an exercise of the “right to die.” Ours is a pluralistic society in which the Church is but one voice. We cannot force others to abide our teachings, but we have every right to proclaim these teachings in the marketplace of ideas and the forums of public opinion and public policy making. As we do so, we must not be intimidated by those who would wrongly characterize our defense of marriage or of the common good as mean-spirited, narrow-minded, or intolerant.

Scriptural Citations

In Genesis we are told, “God created man in his image; in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen 1:27). We are made in God's image and likeness as men and women. Therefore both male and female are necessary to most fully image God. Genesis tells us that “a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body” (Gen 2:24).

When Jesus speaks of marriage, he does not quote the prophets or the law, but returns to the second chapter of Genesis for his authority. The union of a man and a woman is considered so representative of the divine image and will that it takes precedence over all social and legal accommodations: “Let man not separate what God has joined together” (Matt 19:6). Two men or two women cannot complete this image. Only the union between one man and one woman can be “an intimate communion of life and love” and the complete image of God (Catechism of the Catholic Church). The first decree of the Bible tells Adam and Eve and all married couples to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). This is only possible in the sexual union of one man and one woman. In the light of these revelations, the Church teaches that marriage and sex serve two purposes: (1) union, and (2) procreation.

Defining Marriage in Civil Law

Marriage has been part of every culture and tradition since the beginning of time. Throughout history, one man and one woman have been biologically necessary to create a family. Human physiology and the natural biological connection between heterosexual sex, procreation, and children prove that marriage is not simply a religious or social imposition, but rather a natural element of life that human beings discovered, much the same as we discovered other natural truths such as the existence of gravity. Marriage is between one man and one woman, and no government should falsely claim otherwise.

If the basic reality of marriage—that is only possible between one man and one woman—can simply be eliminated to appease one group of individuals, the government will not be able to justify upholding the other basic requirements for marriage when other groups come forward. Thus, prohibiting polygamous marriage, incestuous marriage, and possibly even marriage involving a minor will be considered bigoted and discriminatory. Is this what society wants? Does this elevate the state’s moral fiber? Surely not.

One-man and one-woman marriage does not discriminate against any group of individuals. Marriage is available to every citizen subject to the same basic requirements: Partners in marriage must have attained the age of majority; they cannot be relatives of the first degree; neither of them can already be married; and they must be a man and a woman. Anyone who demands the right to marry outside of these requirements is demanding not equal rights, but additional rights.

Since marriage is the creation of neither the state nor the Church, neither the government nor the Church can redefine it. Maintaining marriage to be what we all know to be true—a union between one man and one woman—is part of our moral and civic duty. Catholics are called to uphold the sacred gift of marriage for the protection of families and all of society.

“Marriage is not just any old union between human persons, susceptible to being configured according to a plurality of cultural models,” Pope John Paul II said in a speech on February 1, 2004, to the Roman Rota. “When the Church teaches that matrimony is a natural thing, it proposes a truth made plain by reason for the good of the couples and of society.”

To Get Involved

Additional background on this matter, including how to contact your state legislators, is available on the web site of the Maryland Catholic Conference www.mdcathcon.org. Visiting the web site will enable you (1) to identify the state lawmakers who represent your area, (2) to learn how they voted on bills that equate same-sex relationships with traditional marriage, (3) to directly thank those legislators who voted to support traditional marriage, and (4) to call to task those who did not, and to encourage them to get it right by voting in January to uphold Governor Ehrlich’s vetoes.

For Further Study

From the Vatican at www.vatican.va

- Second Vatican Council. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Guadium et Spes), nos. 47-52. 1965
- Pope John Paul II. *On the Family* (Familiaris Consortio) 1982.
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 369-373, 1601-1666 and 2331-2400. 2000.
- *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*. 2003.

From the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops at www.usccb.org

- *Follow the Way of Love: A Pastoral Message of the U.S. Catholic Bishops to Families*. 1993.
- *Between Man and Woman: Questions and Answers About Marriage and Same-Sex Unions*. 2003.

Citations from:

- *New American Bible*
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- *Pastoral Statement on Marriage, Sexuality and Chastity*. Archdiocese of Baltimore, William Cardinal Keeler. 2000.

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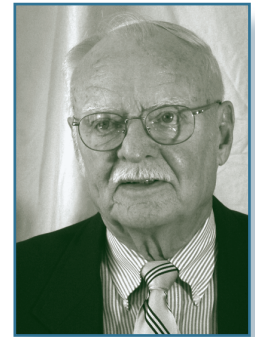
Scientists and Physicians Form Ethical-Research Organization

Maryland medical and scientific professionals from across the state are organizing to oppose policy proposals that would involve the state in unethical research.

Concerned by the Maryland General Assembly's near enactment of 2005 legislation that would have invested state funds in human-cloning and embryonic stem cell research, physicians and research scientists from some of the state's top hospitals and research institutions have come together to insist that state-funded research should be guided by strict ethical principles that respect human life and human dignity at all stages of life.

Calling their new organization the Maryland Coalition for Ethical Research, the group is actively

enlisting the involvement of like-minded medical professionals, scientists, and ethicists. Its founding director is Lyle Sensenbrenner of Salisbury. Dr. Sensenbrenner is a retired physician-scientist who spent most of his career researching the use of stem cells for the treatment of human disorders. He is the former director of the Experimental Hematology Laboratory at the Johns Hopkins Oncology Center. At the University of Maryland, he developed an allogeneic



Sensenbrenner

Continued on next page

New Baltimore Auxiliary Joins Governing Board

Bishop Denis J. Madden is the newest member of the Conference's Board of Governors. He was ordained an Auxiliary Bishop for the Archdiocese of Baltimore on August 24, 2005 and also serves as Urban Vicar to the more than 56,000 Catholics in 50 parishes in Baltimore City.

Ordained in 1967 for the Benedictine Community of St. Paul's Abbey in Newton, New Jersey, his request for incardination to the Archdiocese of Baltimore was granted in 1976.



Bishop Madden

Father Madden received a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Notre Dame. He moved to Baltimore in 1973, taking a position in the Psychology program at the University of Maryland. He also worked part-time as a marriage and

family counselor for Associated Catholic Charities.

In 1988, Father Madden received permission from Archbishop Borders to work with poor Palestinians in the Holy Land. He was first the Jerusalem director, and then associate secretary general, of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, where he was known as a conflict-resolution specialist.

"With deep appreciation for his faith and other priestly gifts, I am delighted to express to the Holy Father deep gratitude for his goodness in sending us a bishop whose service will be a blessing both to us in the archdiocese and to the entire Church in the United States," said Cardinal Keeler on the occasion of Bishop Madden's appointment. "He will help connect us to the Holy Land, obviously a peace priority for the Church and for all who pray for 'the peace of Jerusalem.'"

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- Please respond to the e-mail confirmation by clicking on your "Reply" button. Doing so will activate the service.
- When you receive an e-mail alert, you will be able to respond online. The service will automatically direct your communication to your legislator.

Minimum Wage—Continued

nity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life.” Currently, she noted, a minimum-wage earner working full time earns \$10,712 a year, which is nearly \$5,400 under the \$16,090 federal poverty line for a family of three. “At \$892 a month,” she said, “these earnings are barely enough to pay the rent, let alone the food, clothing, health-care, and utility bills.” Varner is the Conference’s associate director for social concerns.

The federal minimum wage established by Congress in 1938 has since been raised 19 times,

about once every three years. But it has been eight years since the last increase and the hourly wage has lost nearly 20 percent of its value across that period – the \$5.15-an-hour wage of 1997 equals about \$4.16 in 2005 dollars.

Responding to Congress’ reluctance to raise the federal minimum, 15 states and the District of Columbia have acted on their own. Their 2006 minimum wages range from Wisconsin’s \$5.75 an hour to Washington State’s \$7.35. Delaware has a \$6.15 minimum wage, and the District of Columbia’s current \$6.60-an-hour minimum wage will jump to \$7.00 next year.

“This is a matter of simple justice,” Varner said. “The increase will give minimum-wage earners \$160 more a month to meet their basic needs and this will prove particularly helpful to the state’s most vulnerable workers—single mothers, immigrants, and those whose education or skills are limited.”

Research—Continued

neic stem cell transplant program.

The Conference’s Nancy Fortier hailed the development. “Everyone is in favor of medical and scientific research,” she said, “but there’s need to insist that research is done in an ethical fashion. The choice isn’t between science and ethics, but between science that is ethically responsible and science that is not. It’s heartening to know that we’ll now have a group of people who can help lawmakers make that distinction.”

Medical and research professionals interested in joining the new coalition are encouraged to send their names and contact information (mailing and e-mail addresses, phone numbers) to MCER, P.O. Box 1743, Annapolis, Maryland 21401.

**February 20—
Save the Date**

Join Catholics from across Maryland at the Conference’s 22nd Annual Lobby Night in Annapolis on Monday, February 20—Presidents’ Day,

a state and federal holiday. The program starts at 3:00 p.m. and features issue briefings and visits with lawmakers. For more information or to register, go to the Conference’s web site (www.mdcathcon.org), or call Chris Santo (410/269-1155, or 301/261-1779).

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