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L.A. Bishops on Same-Sex Marriage

"Church Cannot Approve of Redefining Marriage"

LOS ANGELES, JUNE 16, 2008 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is the statement released today by the bishops of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles titled "The State of California and Same-Sex Marriage."

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The Catholic Bishops of the United States have affirmed repeatedly that persons with a homosexual orientation "must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity." [1] Accordingly the Bishops condemn all forms of violence, scorn, and hatred -- whether subtle or overt -- against men and women who are homosexual. All people, regardless of sexual inclination, are called to holiness; and "should be encouraged to take an active role in the faith community" and to live according to its teachings. [2]

Nonetheless, the Church cannot approve of redefining marriage, which has a unique place in God's creation, joining a man and a woman in a committed relationship in order to nurture and support the new life for which marriage is intended. The meaning of marriage is deeply rooted in history and culture, and has been shaped considerably by Christian tradition. Its meaning is given, not constructed. "When marriage is redefined so as to make other relationships equivalent to it, the institution of marriage is devalued and further weakened." [3]

The state has a primary and fundamental obligation to protect and promote the family, which is rooted in marriage and sustained by it.

Some benefits currently sought by same sex partners can already be obtained without regard to marital status. For example, individuals can agree to own property jointly with another, and they can generally designate anyone they choose to be a beneficiary of their will or to make health care decisions in case they become incompetent. [4] Other desired benefits such as sharing in a partner's health insurance could be made available without the drastic step of a cultural or legal redefinition of marriage.

Let us strengthen our resolve to respect the dignity of each human being and to protect the sanctity of marriage, asking God's guidance in our efforts to promote the common good central to a free and democratic society.

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[1] Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2358.

[2] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care" (November 14, 2006), 16.

[3] Ibid., 15.

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[4] See USCCB, "Between Man and Woman: Questions and Answers about Marriage and Same-Sex Unions," (November 12, 2003).

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