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A STATEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF CALIFORNIA IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSITION 8: *A Constitutional Amendment to Restore the Definition of Marriage*

August 1, 2008

“Only the rock of complete and irrevocable love between man and woman is capable of acting as a foundation for a society that can be home to all human beings.”

—Pope Benedict XVI, addressing the John Paul II Institute
for Studies on Marriage and the Family, May 11, 2006

The issue before us with Proposition 8 is “marriage” – an ancient, yet modern, human institution which pre-exists both Church and government. Marriage, history shows us, is intrinsic to stable, flourishing and hospitable societies. Although cultural differences have occurred, what has never changed is that marriage is the ideal relationship between a man and a woman for the purpose of procreation and the continuation of the human race.

On May 15, 2008, the California Supreme Court ruled that the current law defining marriage as between a man and a woman is unconstitutional. This radical change in public policy will have many profound effects on our society, because it

- Discounts the biological and organic reality of marriage – and how deeply embedded it is in our culture, our language and our laws and ignores the common understanding of the word marriage; and because it
- Diminishes the word “marriage” to mean only a “partnership” – a purely adult contractual arrangement for individuals over the age of 18. Children – if there are any – are no longer a primary societal rationale for the institution.

As teachers of the faith, we invite our faithful Catholics to carefully form their consciences. We do that by drawing on the revelation of Scripture, the wisdom of Tradition, the experience and insights of holy men and women as well as on what can be known by reason alone.

Crystallizing the teaching on marriage, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1603, 1604) proclaims:

God himself is the author of marriage. The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator. Marriage is not a purely human institution despite the many variations it may have undergone through the centuries in different cultures, social structures, and spiritual attitudes. The well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life.

With all this in mind, we, as bishops, offer counsel to our Catholic people in California in their response to this radical change in California's public policy regarding marriage.

First, same-sex unions are *not* the same as opposite-sex unions. The marriage of a man and a woman embraces not only their sexual complementarity as designed by nature but includes their ability to procreate. The ideal for the well being of children is to be born into a traditional marriage and to be raised by both a mother and a father. We recognize that there are parents who are single and we laud them for the great sacrifices they make in raising their children.

Second, we need to recall that marriage mirrors God's relationship with us – and that marriage completes, enriches and perpetuates humanity. When men and women consummate their marriage they offer themselves to God as co-creators of a new human being. Any other pairing – while possibly offering security and companionship to the individuals involved – is not marriage. We must support traditional marriage as the source of our civilization, the foundation for a society that can be home to all human beings, and the reflection of our relationship with God.

Third, we need to remember that we are all children of God possessed of human dignity and that each of us is created in God's image. Protecting the traditional understanding of marriage should not in any way disparage our brothers and sisters – even if they disagree with us.

Fourth, we must pray and work for a just resolution of this issue which is so important to the well being of the human family.

Fifth, as citizens of California, we need to avail ourselves of the opportunity to overturn this ruling by the California Supreme Court. On the November general election ballot, there will be *Proposition 8* which reads: "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California." That language simply affirms the historic, logical and reasonable definition of marriage – and does not remove any benefits from other contractual arrangements.

And finally, we strongly encourage Catholics to provide both the financial support and the volunteer efforts needed for the passage of Proposition 8. And – please exercise your citizenship and vote in November.