



## *Diocese of Rockford*

555 Colman Center Drive

P.O. Box 7044

Rockford, Illinois 61125

(815) 399-4300

Fax (815) 399-4769

Office of the Bishop

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Brothers and sisters in Christ,

I am taking the exceptional step of addressing you at all of the parish Masses this weekend. I do so because there is a danger before us that is exceptional. According to press reports, the Illinois State Legislature is taking up a bill to legalize same-sex marriage in our state under the misleading title, The Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act. At issue here is not a political or a policy question, but a fundamental statement about society itself. We need to be alerted to this danger.

Our Catholic faith is rooted in the words of Christ and the Sacred Scriptures. It reminds us that marriage itself is a life-long covenant that can take place only between a man and a woman. This is because it provides the context for the physical and personal complementarity that we all recognize between male and female. In addition, it is the natural basis for the conception and raising of children who have a right to recognize their parents whose unity is their source and origin. Same-sex unions will not and cannot accomplish that. Traditional marriage concepts are not restricted to Catholicism or even to religious faith. They have been understood and embraced throughout history as the basis of human interaction.

The current effort to redefine marriage in the State of Illinois, whether it is intended to do so or not, undermines marriage as a fundamental element of society. It cannot be simply understood as a different way of looking at things that is part of the normal societal diversity to which we have become accustomed.

The redefinition of marriage would have other profound consequences as well. For example, the equation of same-sex marriage to traditional marriage opens the door to the imposition on consciences concerning our ability to teach and to live fully our Catholic faith. If such a bill is passed, individuals and our own religious institutions will face pressures to treat both same-sex marriage and traditional marriage as equally legitimate options, in violation of our deeply held beliefs and convictions. In short, this will be another step toward the curtailment of religious freedom.

Defense of the nature of marriage is not some form of long standing discrimination or bigotry. Our Catholic faith teaches us to love our brother and sisters; all of them. We respect the human dignity of every person as created in the image and likeness of God. But we must, at the same time, respect and support the protection of the fundamental human relationship that confirms the complementary nature that we bear. That is, marriage as an exclusive commitment between a man and a woman.

I urge you to visit the Illinois Catholic Conference website at [www.ilcatholic.org](http://www.ilcatholic.org) to learn how to contact your state legislators and let them know of your opposition to this proposed legislation.

With gratitude to you and the promise of my prayers, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *David J. Malloy*

The Most Reverend David J. Malloy  
Bishop of Rockford