

**Statement of the Council of the Baptized
In opposition to Amending the MN Constitution to Define Marriage
May 8, 2012**

The Council of the Baptized, the collegial voice of Catholics in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, hereby states its opposition to the "Marriage Amendment" to the Minnesota Constitution, placed on the ballot for the election in November, 2012.

1. As American citizens, we embrace the Fourteenth Amendment guaranty of equal protection under the law and oppose constitutional change that deprives same-gender couples of the benefits that accrue to opposite-gender couples in civil marriage.
2. Because American Catholics have benefited from the constitutional guaranties of equal protection under the law, we recognize that such protections are of great value to all citizens. We wish to see those protections strengthened in the State of Minnesota.
3. For the common good, we believe that all families – including families formed by same-sex couples – should receive the same benefits and regulations of civil law.
4. Notwithstanding the position of the Minnesota Catholic Conference on the issue of the Marriage Amendment, we as Catholics are encouraged to speak in opposition by the teaching of Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes*, "Let it be recognized that all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and thought and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence." (*GS*, 62). We enjoy competence by virtue of the fact that we are persons of same-sex orientation, we are parents of gay and lesbian adults, we are families and friends of gay and lesbian men and women, and we are fellow citizens of the State of Minnesota.
5. We believe in the freedom of the Catholic Church and all faiths to teach and practice their doctrine of marriage notwithstanding civil laws that interpret marriage differently.
6. We believe that Catholics individually and the Catholic Church collectively should embrace the inclusion of the socially marginalized as a sign of the reign of God as proclaimed, taught and manifested by Jesus.
7. We deeply disagree with the Minnesota Catholic Conference for expending millions of dollars in charitably donated monies on this issue, money which should have been directed instead to the mission of the Church in feeding the hungry, comforting the suffering, sheltering the homeless and speaking out for those who have no voice.
8. We deeply disagree with the Minnesota Catholic Conference for attempting to silence the voice of those wishing to be heard before the Minnesota State Legislature and the Minnesota State Courts regarding the issue of same-sex marriage.
9. We agree with the statement of the Washington State Catholic Conference, issued in 1983 –

"The Church can combat the evil of prejudice against homosexuals by strongly proclaiming the gross evil of prejudicial attitudes and conduct toward lesbians and gays; by fostering legislation to remove systemic prejudice; by making efforts to purify of all prejudice the manner in which it conveys its oral teaching on homosexuality; by encouraging empirical research on homosexuality and the ways to combat prejudice against lesbians and gays; and by fostering ongoing theological research and criticism, with regard to its own theological tradition on homosexuality, none of which is infallibly taught."
10. We understand the major objections to same sex marriages are: First, same sex marriage will harm heterosexual marriages – but there is no evidence supporting this objection and in states where same sex marriages are allowed, divorce rates have remained unchanged. Second, same sex marriage will lessen our recognition of the dignity of persons – but denying the benefits of civil marriage to same sex couples is contrary to church social teaching that all persons are to be treated equally and fairly. Third, same sex marriage will harm children – but there is no evidence of harm to the children of same sex couples and scientific studies demonstrate that the children of same sex marriages are flourishing. Fourth, same sex marriage will violate religious liberty – but even if same sex marriages were allowed, there would be exceptions for religious organizations to prohibit such marriages in their church just like it is permissible for churches to discriminate against women in denying the right to be ordained.
11. Given the church's long standing recognition of the right of the state to regulate the civil effects of marriage, we believe that Catholics can support civil marriage of same sex couples without violating church teaching prohibiting same sex sexual relationships.
12. Therefore, to give support to our brothers and sisters who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender and to stand against those who would deny them the right to be treated fairly and equally, we are opposed to the proposed Marriage Amendment that would bar healthy, permanent civil marriages between such of our brothers and sisters.

We stand in support of Catholics for Marriage Equality MN (www.c4me.org) in its opposition to the Marriage Amendment to the Minnesota Constitution.