

# New Jersey Catholic Conference

149 North Warren Street · Trenton, New Jersey 08608

(609) 989-1120 · Fax (609) 989-1152

E-mail: [info@njcathconf.com](mailto:info@njcathconf.com)

Web: [www.njcathconf.com](http://www.njcathconf.com)

**Statement by Patrick R. Brannigan, Executive Director**

**New Jersey Catholic Conference**

**May 6, 2009**

The recent authorization of marriage between individuals of the same sex in a few states has led some to call for passage of a same sex marriage law in New Jersey.

I want to emphasize that the Catholic Church teaches that men and women with homosexual orientations “must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in this regard should be avoided” [Catechism of the Catholic Church].

The teachings of the Church make it clear that the fundamental human rights of homosexual persons must be defended and that all of us must strive to eliminate any forms of injustice, oppression, or violence against homosexual persons. We must always remember that every person has an inherent dignity because he or she is created in the image and likeness of God and that God loves every person as a unique individual.

However, the Catholic Church does not recognize same sex marriage and views the use of the word marriage to describe a same sex relationship as a contradiction of terms.

The Catholic Church's teaching on marriage and on the complementarity of the sexes reiterates a truth that is evident to right reason and recognized as such by all the major cultures of the world.

Marriage is not just any relationship between human beings. It was established by the Creator with its own nature, essential properties and purpose. No ideology can erase from the human spirit the certainty that marriage exists solely between a man and a woman, who by mutual personal gift, proper and exclusive to themselves, tend toward the communion of their persons. In this way, they mutually perfect each other, in order to cooperate with God in the procreation and upbringing of new human lives. (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, July 23, 2003)

Rather than attempting to redefine marriage, the State of New Jersey should enforce the State laws that provide protection for same sex partners.

First among those laws is the Civil Union Act (NJS 10:5-12) that took effect on February 19, 2007. That Act requires all employers in New Jersey to provide to a civil union partner of an employee any and all employee benefits that the employer provides to the spouse of a married employee.

*Representing the Archdiocese of Newark, Diocese of Camden, Diocese of Metuchen,  
Diocese of Paterson, Diocese of Trenton, Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic and  
Our Lady of Deliverance Syriac Catholic Diocese*

The intent of what the Legislature wanted to accomplish through the Civil Union Act is clear in NJS 37:1-28, 1.f:

*The Legislature has chosen to establish civil unions by amending the current marriage statute to include same-sex couples. In doing so, the Legislature is continuing its longstanding history of insuring equality under the laws for all New Jersey citizens by providing same-sex couples with the same rights and benefits as heterosexual couples who choose to marry.*

As to the legal benefits, protections and responsibilities of civil union couples, the Legislature also is clear in NJS 37:1-31, 4.a:

*Civil union couples shall have all of the same benefits, protections and responsibilities under law, whether they derive from statute, administrative or court rule, public policy, common law or any source of civil law, as are granted to spouses in marriage.*

NJS 37:1-32, 5e indicates that civil union couples are entitled to the benefits and protections of “laws relating to insurance, health and pension benefits.” The Civil Union law also lists an array of unlawful employment practices by employers who do not fully implement the Act.

The record shows that the Civil Union Act is working effectively, despite the claims of the Civil Union Review Commission which issued a flawed report that accepted as fact numerous unfounded allegations.

On November 5, 2008, I testified before the Civil Union Commission that only eight (8) complaints had been filed with the Division of Civil Rights claiming that the Civil Union Act was not working. That small number of complaints actually is testimony that the Act is working.

The law is absolutely clear. Civil Union couples have all of the same benefits, protections and responsibilities under law as are granted to spouses in marriage. If Civil Union couples have all of the benefits, protections and responsibilities of marriage, why do we want to redefine marriage?

Marriage as a union of one man and one woman has its roots not only in human tradition and history, but also in natural law, which transcends all man-made law. Marriage is a natural institution. Marriage is distinct in essence from every other arrangement because marriage is always between a man and a woman.

We call upon the State of New Jersey to preserve the definition of marriage as only a union of one man and one woman.

*Founded in 1949, the New Jersey Catholic Conference (NJCC) represents the Catholic Bishops of New Jersey on matters of public policy. NJCC serves as a liaison to governmental agencies and institutions and coordinates communications and activities between the Bishops and secular agencies. The Archbishop of Newark is the President of NJCC. There are more than 3.5 million Catholics registered in seven dioceses throughout New Jersey.*