

**STATEMENT OF MONSIGNOR WILLIAM P. FAY, GENERAL
SECRETARY
OF THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, ON
THE FEDERAL AMENDMENT BEFORE THE SENATE OF THE UNITED
STATES**

JULY 12, 2004

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on a matter that is of vital importance to our nation.

Safeguarding the nature of marriage has always been one of the Catholic Church's constant concerns. The Church believes and teaches that marriage is created by God. It is a faithful, exclusive, lifelong and loving union of a man and a woman who are the foundation of the family unit, which itself is the bedrock of society and culture. Marriage is not an arbitrary social arrangement that can be altered by either the Church or the State. It is God's will for humanity and the keystone of every human community.

In view of the growing efforts of a small but vocal minority to lay aside these truths and to redefine marriage as something that it is not, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops gives its full and unequivocal support to the Federal Marriage Amendment that would amend the United States Constitution to define marriage as consisting only of the union of a man and a woman.

On June 24 of this year, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote to all Catholic Bishops asking them to personally urge their Senators to support the Federal Marriage Amendment. He also asked the Bishops to engage their local pastors to build support for the amendment among the larger Catholic community. On

July 6, he wrote to every member of the United States Senate urging passage of the amendment and resistance to any attempts to prevent the Senate from voting on the amendment.

The protection of marriage is essential to the health and well-being of our nation, and the vast majority of Americans know this. In those states where the electorate was given the opportunity to safeguard marriage as the union of a man and a woman, they did it overwhelmingly. More than two-thirds of the state legislatures have enacted measures to protect marriage, but marriage remains unprotected. Because Americans want that protection, there is every reason to believe that the amendment before the Senate today will be well-received and ranked by them as important as were the amendments introduced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to protect the citizenship and voting rights of every man or woman born or naturalized in the United States.

While I stand before you today as a representative of the Catholic Bishops of the United States, and speak from a standpoint of Catholic faith, the truths about marriage that we seek to protect are truths that are present in the order of nature and can be perceived, even without faith, by the light of natural reason. Just as we know from natural reason that we cannot ignore or violate, without grave consequences, the structure and integrity of the physical world which is our environment, so too we cannot ignore or violate the natural structure of our human relationships which has marriage as the center and foundation of our human community. The failure to protect marriage at this important moment in our history will have devastating consequences for our society and our nation.

On behalf of the Bishops of the United States, I urge every member of the Senate to support the Federal Amendment in order to begin the process of guaranteeing the full protection of marriage.

Thank you very much.