

**Diocese of Worcester**  
**Office of the Bishop**  
49 Elm Street  
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609

My dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

In November 2003, the Supreme Judicial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts did a monumental disservice to the public morality and common good of our society. In a troubling display of judicial activism, four (4) members of the court re-defined the nature of marriage by allowing same-sex couples to receive marriage licenses.

Since this morally-flawed decision was handed down, a group of citizens, representing a broad spectrum of political, moral and religious convictions, has formed a citizen ballot committee called *VoteonMarriage.org*. This committee has launched a drive to gather signatures for a new constitutional amendment in Massachusetts concerning the definition of marriage.

The proposed amendment would read: "When recognizing marriages entered into after the adoption of this amendment by the people, the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions shall define marriage as the union of one man and one woman."

As the chief teacher of faith and morals in the Diocese of Worcester, I am asking you, the Catholic faithful of our diocesan church, to assist me in supporting this signature drive. Some would claim that such an attempt is a breach of the so-called "wall of separation" between church and state or, worse, an attempt to prolong discrimination against persons with a homosexual orientation. This simply is untrue.

The Roman Catholic Church's social and moral doctrine finds its coherent basis in the fundamental principle of the inviolable dignity of the human person. This human dignity derives from a person's being a child of God, the same God who "from the beginning" established the natural institution of marriage as a union between one man and one woman. This firm and time-honored conviction about the nature of marriage is not religiously sectarian or exclusively Catholic. The complementarity of man and woman as essential to marriage has been recognized by virtually all cultures throughout history.

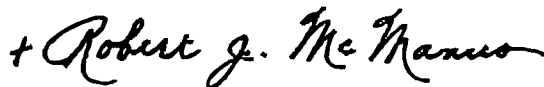
Earlier this month, I wrote to all pastors and priests of our parishes, asking them to support enthusiastically this pastoral effort to safeguard traditional marriage between one man and one woman by implementing the signature drive in their parishes during the weekend of October 1-2, 2005.

Jesus Christ teaches us in the Gospel of St. Matthew that we who are his faithful disciples are called to be "light of the world and salt of the earth." (Mt. 5:13-14) I am asking you, the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Worcester, to join me in preserving the nature of marriage as God himself has intended it to be. In so doing, you and I will be fulfilling the invitation of the Second Vatican Council and the recent teaching of our late beloved Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, to transform the contemporary culture in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the moral wisdom of the Catholic Church.

May God bless our sincere efforts in this important work!

With every prayerful best wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert J. McManus". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus, D.D., S.T.D.  
Bishop of Worcester

September 26, 2005