



ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE
2121 COMMONWEALTH AVENUE
BRIGHTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02135-3193

September 1, 2005

Dear Monsignor/Father:

As we move from the slower pace of late summer into the many "start ups" of September I hope that you were able to find time for rest and renewal during July and August. Please be assured of my continued appreciation of your many responsibilities in the midst of challenging times for the Archdiocese and of my gratitude for all that you do for your parishes and the people you serve.

September also brings a resurgence of legislative and public policy activity. With respect to the matter of the definition of marriage, the issues raised by the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts having legalized same-sex marriage in the Commonwealth as of May 2004 are not yet resolved or settled. A citizens committee, *VoteOnMarriage.org*, has been formed for the purpose of sponsoring the *Massachusetts Protection of Marriage Amendment*, which would define marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The Roman Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts support this initiative. The committee seeks a 2008 statewide referendum that would allow citizens to vote on whether or not same-sex marriage should be legal in Massachusetts. The people of our state have a right to decide this matter.

One of the committee's first steps in working toward the 2008 referendum is gathering at least 66,000 signatures of registered voters by November 18 of this year. The parishes of the Archdiocese can be an important help in the signature drive, I encourage the cooperation of your parish in this campaign. It is permissible for signatures to be collected at parish Masses and appropriate events, and to insert copies of the signature petition in your parish bulletins should you wish to do so. Designating a parishioner to organize the signature-gathering efforts in your parish would be very helpful to the initiative committee. A parish coordinator could contact the Massachusetts Catholic Conference (MCC) for further instruction at their earliest convenience, training will be available for parish coordinators. MCC's contact information is (Telephone) 617-367-6060, (FAX) 617-367-2767, (email) staff@macathconf.org. The MCC will send you further informational materials on the proposed amendment in a separate communication.

Assuring you of a remembrance in my prayers, I remain

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Sean O'Meara
Archbishop of Boston