



DIOCESE OF FALL RIVER
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August 12, 2005

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Reverend and dear Father:

From September 21st to the third week of November, a citizen ballot committee called VoteOnMarriage.org will gather signatures for a new constitutional amendment in Massachusetts on the definition of marriage. The amendment would define marriage as the union between one man and one woman. Help at the parish level is vital.

The Roman Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts back this initiative. The effort responds to the 2004 ruling of the Supreme Judicial Court that forced the state to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The people have a right to decide the matter and the signature drive is the first critical step towards placing the issue on the 2008 statewide ballot.

I encourage the cooperation of your parish in this important campaign. The Massachusetts Catholic Conference, working with Ambassador Ray Flynn's group, Catholic Citizenship, will help coordinate efforts among Catholics.

You may permit the collection of signatures at appropriate parish events and at weekend Masses, including, if you choose, having sign-up tables and inserting copies of the signature petition in your bulletins. Your support would greatly aid VoteOnMarriage.org in reaching its goal of acquiring well over 66,000 signatures by November 23rd.

It would be very helpful if you could designate a parishioner to organize signature gathering efforts in your parish. Please ask this person to contact the MCC for further instruction, ideally by the end of August. Identifying parish contacts early is crucial, in order to plan for a big push for signatures in the parishes early in October.

The MCC will forward the names of all parish contacts to Catholic Citizenship, which will provide training and coordinate the grassroots efforts in the parishes. MCC's contact information is (p) 617-367-6060, (f) 617-367-2767, and (email) staff@macathconf.org.

The MCC will send you further informational materials on the new amendment in a separate communication.

Thank you for your consideration, and assuring you of my prayers and best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ George W. Coleman
Bishop of Fall River