



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

Dear Monsignor/Father:

From September 21st to the third week of November 2005, 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 a union between one man and one woman. Help at the parish level is vital to its successful passage.

The Roman Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts back this initiative. The effort responds to the 2004 ruling of the Supreme Judicial Court that compelled 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 strongly encourage the cooperation of your parish in this important campaign. The Massachusetts Catholic Conference (MCC), 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, 2005.

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 major 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 the training and coordinate the grassroots efforts in the parishes. MCC's contact information is (phone) 617-367-6060; (fax) 617-367-2767; and (e-mail) staff@macathconf.org. The MCC will send you further informational materials on the new amendment in a separate communication.

I look forward to your cooperation in addressing this crucial matter that significantly impinges upon the pastoral life of the Church in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

With every prayerful best wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Robert J. McManus*

Most Reverend Robert J. McManus
 Bishop of Worcester

August 16, 2005