

## **PROTECT MARRIAGE ARIZONA INITIATIVE DESERVES OUR SUPPORT**

**By Ron Johnson**

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The traditional definition of marriage as a lifelong union between one man and one woman for the benefit of children has always been a cornerstone of our society. This understanding of marriage predates not only our government, but also all organized religions, and is essentially unchangeable in nature.

Nonetheless, throughout the United States, and even the world, marriage is currently under attack by those seeking to redefine its inherent nature. Fortunately, in our country people are now coming to the defense of the institution of marriage and overwhelmingly enacting ballot measures in numerous states to enshrine and preserve the unique status of marriage.

Locally, Protect Marriage Arizona is precisely such an effort to preserve the unique and irreplaceable status that marriage has always held in our society. Thankfully, Catholic organizations in our own state such as the Knights of Columbus and the Phoenix Diocesan Council of Catholic Women have generously come forward and are actively circulating petitions in parishes to place this important initiative on the ballot.

Perhaps Pope John Paul II described the contemporary situation the best when he proclaimed “*[a]t a moment in history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it, or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family, insuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and thus, contributing to the renewal of society and the people of God.*” (John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* #3)

Marriage is important because it is the foundation of the family. The family, in turn, is the basic unit of society. Marriage is, therefore, a personal relationship with public significance.

It only makes sense that a strong definition of marriage will benefit and strengthen society. Similarly, a weak definition of marriage that reduces, or eliminates, its unique status will ultimately harm society. Consistent with this reasoning, the Catholic Church is, therefore, opposed to the “legal recognition of homosexual unions” in order to prevent the redefinition and devaluation of the institution of marriage. (*Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* #11)

In speaking on these matters, it remains important to emphasize that people of all sexual orientations must always be treated with compassion and respect and that their individual civil liberties must be protected. The Catechism of the Catholic Church further

elaborates in reference to people of homosexual orientation that “[e]very sign of unjust discrimination in this regard should be avoided.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2358)

The Protect Marriage Arizona initiative is consistent with these principles while preserving the definition of marriage as between one man and one woman. It is for these reasons that the Bishops of the Arizona Catholic Conference issued their pastoral statement in March entitled “Why is Marriage Important to the Catholic Church?” and formally endorsed this effort.

While there will undoubtedly will be many other important measures on the ballot this year, the defense of the institution of marriage involves an issue that is a foundational matter for both the Catholic Church and society as a whole. Amending our State Constitution through the Protect Marriage Arizona initiative is good public policy and deserves the utmost support.

For more information about Protect Marriage Arizona or the Arizona Catholic Conference, please visit [www.protectmarriageaz.com](http://www.protectmarriageaz.com) or [www.azcatholicconference.org](http://www.azcatholicconference.org). To assist in circulating petitions, you may contact Genny Jones of the Phoenix Diocesan Council of Catholic Women at 480 201-7198 or Joe Rostowsky of the Knights of Columbus at 480 342-9018.