



## ARIZONA'S STAR SHINES BRIGHTLY

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With the conclusion of the recent elections, there has been much commentary about the national results and what they mean for issues of importance to the Catholic Church. For its own part, however, Arizona has been described as a “shining star” following the November elections and a place with plenty of reasons to be hopeful as 2009 begins.

Perhaps the biggest reason for optimism in Arizona is the overwhelming passage of Proposition 102, which places the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman in the Arizona Constitution. Proposition 102 passed with broad support from people of many faiths, including Orthodox Jews, Evangelicals, and Mormons. It is the effort from the Catholic Bishops, however, that also deserves special attention.

Part of these efforts have been chronicled in the Political Almanac put out annually by the Arizona Capitol Times, where the Catholic Church was recently credited in a survey of Capitol insiders for its work in getting the marriage amendment on the ballot and also mentioned among those who are most influential at the Capitol.

Similarly, national publications, including the Weekly Standard, have commented on the success of Proposition 102 and made specific mention of the remarkable support from churchgoing Catholics. The positive movement among this demographic was undoubtedly instrumental in passing Proposition 102 and is worthy of attention.

In September, Catholics were viewed as a swing group on Proposition 102 based on internal polls conducted by the campaign. The number of Catholic churchgoers in support was 44 percent at that time.

During September and all of October, however, the Bishops worked on a number of different high profile projects that changed these results dramatically week after week.

First, the Bishops released a joint statement through the Arizona Catholic Conference supporting Proposition 102. In subsequent weeks, Bishop Olmsted then released an unprecedented video endorsing Proposition 102 that was to be played at all Masses. Over 100,000 copies of his booklet “Catholics in the Public Square” were also distributed during the month of October emphasizing the sanctity of marriage and all human life.

In addition to the joint statement, Bishop Kicanas wrote a highly effective op-ed piece for the Arizona Daily Star, and the Knights of Columbus contributed \$100,000 to the overall campaign. Numerous Catholics also volunteered time and money to the effort in and around their parishes.

By the end of the campaign, the fruit of these efforts resulted in an almost 40% movement in the number of churchgoing Catholics supporting Proposition 102! In actual numbers, post election polling showed Catholic churchgoers voted 82% - 18% in support of the amendment.

It should be noted that Catholics who do not attend church regularly, if ever, were almost evenly divided on Proposition 102. Those who do regularly attend church, however, were much more likely to receive messages from the Bishops and they responded in numbers that were unheard of and outright staggering.

As we look forward to 2009, there are going to be many important issues facing our state and our country. For example, the economic troubles our country is currently experiencing are having an impact everywhere, and we are still looking for a humane solution to the immigration crisis.

Nonetheless, Arizona is blessed to have a legislature that will seemingly be more favorable to issues pertaining to the sanctity of human life and school choice. Additionally, the tremendous response of Arizonans, and especially churchgoing Catholics, to the marriage amendment is much to be grateful for at this time.

As we reflect on everything happening this time of year, I do not think it is a stretch to describe Arizona as a “shining star” and a place for authentic hope.

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