

Created in the Divine Image: Orthodox Jewish-Catholic Statement on Marriage

September 2, 2008

Many communities within the United States are now engaged in a new conversation on the meaning of the word “marriage”, questioning whether it should describe a union only between a man and a woman. As leaders of our respective faiths, we, as Orthodox Rabbis, communal leaders and representatives of the Roman Catholic Bishops of the United States, wish to affirm our shared commitment to the ordinance of God, the Almighty One, who created man and woman in the divine image (Gen. 1:26-27), so that they might share as male and female, as helpmates and equals (Gen. 2:21-24), in the procreation of children (Gen. 1:28) and the building up of society.

We now confront a demand that same sex unions be classified as marriage. Advocates of this position argue that to do otherwise is to engage in a form of discrimination against homosexuals. We recognize that all persons share equally in the dignity of human nature and are entitled to have that human dignity protected, but this does not justify the creation of a new definition for a term whose traditional meaning is of critical importance to the furtherance of a fundamental societal interest.

God’s design for the continuance of human life, as seen in the natural order, as well as in the Bible (Gen. 1-3), clearly revolves around the union of male and female, first as husband and wife, and then as parents. A unique goal of marriage, which is reproduction and the raising of families, exists apart from that of same sex unions, which cannot equally participate in this essential function. While others may claim the right to establish private relationships between persons of the same gender that simulate marriage, the legal classification of such relationships as marriage dilutes the special standing of marriage between a man and a woman. Since the future of every society depends upon its ability to reproduce itself according to this natural order and to have its young people reared in a stable environment, it is the duty of the state to protect the traditional place of marriage and the family for the good of society.

While others have the freedom to disagree with us, we hope that even those outside of our common religious traditions will recognize that we speak from the truth of human nature itself which is consistent with both reason and the moral life. We also call upon our local faith communities to consider carefully the long held traditions of Jews and Christians on the nature of marriage as built upon the commitment of a man and a woman desirous of establishing a family for contributing to the common good of humanity.

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