



## **Archbishop Alex J. Brunett Statement on the Definition of Marriage** **March 11, 2004**

The Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle believes recent attempts to redefine the institution of marriage, including the executive order signed by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels recognizing same-sex marriages, are misguided and unfortunate. In 1998 the Legislature of the State of Washington passed the Defense of Marriage Act defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman. This legislation reflects the time-honored understanding of marriage by both church and society. Amending public policy by executive order or judicial activism disregards the legislative process and mutes the voice of the people. The Archdiocese of Seattle calls on government officials to set aside personal preferences and pre-emptive political tactics and observe the principles of sound democratic process.

Marriage has both spiritual and civil dimensions. The Catholic Church, like all major religions, defines marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman ordered by its nature toward the good of the spouses, procreation and the education of children. This covenant is unique and intended to be indissoluble. Within the Catholic faith tradition the marriage covenant between baptized people is raised by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament. The bond between a man and woman in a truly loving marriage also serves as the foundation for civil society and the cornerstone for family life. In the context of this civil dimension, marriage has played an essential role in the growth and development of human civilization.

The Catholic community supports the dignity and worth of every human being. That is the basis of our formation, our teaching and our charitable outreach. Marriage is the most basic and universal of social institutions and its fundamental definition is upheld not only by church teaching but by a broad and longstanding public consensus. Since many of the benefits currently sought by persons in homosexual unions can be obtained without regard to marital status, no compelling justification exists for altering the traditional definition of marriage. Furthermore, because of its essential contribution to social stability marriage should not be arbitrarily manipulated by elected officials or the judiciary to appease selective interest groups for political advantage or to validate the parameters of their social agenda.

We acknowledge with sadness that in recent years the bond of marriage has been weakened and undermined by a culture that no longer upholds the full dignity due the married state and the unique relationship between husband and wife. This culture creates an unfavorable environment for children who often become the unintended victims of family disintegration. In response to this reality we must commit ourselves to better prepare couples for lifelong marriage, strengthen existing unions and find ways to assist marriages in crisis.

Therefore, the Archdiocese of Seattle, while opposing all unjust discrimination against any individual, calls for public officials to honor the normal processes of government and to reaffirm the long-cherished definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman that has served throughout history as both a building block and mortar for church and society.

