



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 12, 2012

## Minnesota Archbishop Orders Priests: Support Traditional Marriage or Be Quiet

According to the [Progressive Catholic Voice](#), a blog that supports same-sex marriage, the letter from Archbishop John Niensedt was addressed to the priests and deacons of the archdiocese and was originally published in the *Archdiocesan Updates* newsletter.

In the epistle to his fellow priests, Niensedt, who has been a vocal supporter of the marriage amendment, wrote, "I do not believe it is an exaggeration to say that in this movement to protect and defend the definition of marriage as a union between one man and one woman we are faced with one of the greatest challenges of our times." He warned that the goal of those who oppose passage of the marriage amendment "is not just to secure certain benefits for a particular minority, but, I believe, to eliminate the need for marriage altogether."



He advised that it is "my expectation that all the priests and deacons in this Archdiocese will support" the marriage amendment efforts. He added that the "gravity of this struggle, and the radical consequences of inaction propels me to place a solemn charge upon you all — on your ordination day, you made a promise to promote and defend all that the Church teaches. I call upon that promise in this effort to defend marriage."

The archbishop then requested silence from those priests who had any opposition to the amendment, advising that there "ought not be open dissension on this issue. If any have personal reservations, I do not wish that they be shared publicly. If anyone believes in conscience that he cannot cooperate, I want him to contact me directly and I will plan to respond personally."

Predictably, there was a requisite response of outrage over the archbishop's dictum, including some tongue-clucking from supposed church members. Paula Ruddy, a member of the Progressive Catholic's editorial board, claimed incredulity. "When I first read this letter I couldn't believe that the Archbishop was telling priests and deacons to be silent if they were opposed to the marriage amendment," she said in a statement. "Is one's position on whether the State constitution should be amended a matter of Church doctrine? How are Catholics to form their consciences if their pastors are not candid with them?"

Dennis McGrath, the archdiocese's communications director, told [LifeSiteNews.com](#) that it was "outlandish" that the Archbishop would be attacked for providing oversight and guidance to the priests in his diocese. "He's got every right to send a letter to his priests" on the matter. He added that the Catholic Church has "some hard folks to deal with right now," not the least of which is the secular



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media, which, he said, serves “as a megaphone for these LGBT groups.”

The [American Independent](#) noted that the archdiocese has taken an active part in promoting pro-family candidates as well as the passage of Minnesota’s marriage amendment. “In the run-up to the 2010 gubernatorial election,” noted the website, “the church sent out approximately 400,000 DVDs and mailings urging Catholics to vote for Republican Tom Emmer, the only candidate in the race who opposed marriage equality for same-sex couples and a staunch Catholic.” Emmer was ultimately defeated by liberal Democratic former U.S. Senator Mark Dayton, an aggressive supporter of the homosexual agenda.

“More recently,” continued the *Independent*, “the Archdiocese’s lobbying wing, the Minnesota Catholic Conference, has joined with the [National Organization for Marriage](#) and the [Minnesota Family Council](#) to form the [Minnesota for Marriage Coalition](#), a group dedicated to passing the amendment in November.”

The proposed state constitutional amendment defining marriage as only between a man and a woman was passed in May by both houses of Minnesota’s state legislature, “which means that the proposed amendment will be placed on the state ballot for Minnesota voters to decide in November 2012,” reported [The New American](#) in May. “If passed it will make Minnesota one of more than 30 states that have actively protected traditional marriage via their state constitutions.”



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