



**Diocese of Belleville**  
**Bishop Edward K. Braxton**

**The State of Illinois and Same-Sex “Marriage”**  
**November 6, 2013**

On November 5, 2013, the Illinois House passed **Senate Bill 10** on a 61-54 vote, with two voting “present.” The Senate approved the legislation on Feb. 14, 2013. Gov. Pat Quinn has said he will sign the legislation into law this month. This Bill changes the state of Illinois’ definition of marriage from “between a man and a woman” to “between two persons” and offers very little religious freedom protections to churches, religious employers and organizations, businesses and individuals. Illinois becomes the fifteenth U.S. state to approve such a redefinition of marriage.

The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Belleville, and the other Bishops of the Province of Chicago, headed by Francis Cardinal George, constitute the Board of Directors of the Catholic Conference of Illinois.

**They issued the following statement on the House Passage of Senate Bill 10, Redefinition of Marriage Legislation.**

Today’s decision by Illinois lawmakers to change the definition of marriage not only goes against the common consensus of the human race – which understands that nature tells us that marriage is the union of one man and one woman – but it also undermines an institution that is the cornerstone of a healthy society. The optimal condition in which to raise children is a home that includes both a mother and father, since women and men are not interchangeable.

The Catholic Conference of Illinois is deeply disappointed that members of the General Assembly chose to redefine what is outside of its authority: a natural institution like marriage. We remain concerned about the very real threats to religious liberty that are at stake with the passage of this Bill.

We thank the thousands of citizens across Illinois who joined us in our efforts to preserve marriage in law. This was a truly bipartisan and ecumenical effort, reflective of the fact that a marriage is universally understood as being between a man and a woman.

**Bishop Braxton made the following personal statement:**

The Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St. Mark (10, 6-9) declares: “But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. This is why a man must leave his father and mother, and the two become one body. Therefore, they are no longer two but one body. So then, what God has joined together, man must not put asunder.” Through the two thousand years of Christianity these words have been understood not simply as a peculiar religious belief of Judaism and Christianity. They have been understood as an articulation of the universally recognized complementary relationship between a man and a woman, not simply “two persons.”

Since the dawn of man, there has been a fundamental awareness of the unitive nature of the relationship between a man and a woman. The unique meaning of the words “husband” and “wife” and “father” and “mother” have been recognized not as tenets from a particular religion but from the human condition, the basic anthropology of what human beings are. Therefore, it is beyond the competence of any state or government body to “redefine” marriage or to suggest that all people, without regard to their gender, have a “civil right” to be married. It is scandalous that the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, were cited out of context on the floor of the legislature leading to implications that Catholics who supported this Bill were imitating the spirit of the Pontiff’s pastoral outreach to those who feel estranged from the Church. However, nothing could be further from the truth. His Holiness has stated unambiguously that same sex “marriage” is incompatible with human nature, the teachings of Scripture, and the doctrine of the Catholic Church.

It should be clear to all Catholics that when the Church speaks of marriage, she is speaking of a sacrament, a spiritual covenant relationship that is bound to the relationship between God and Creation, the relationship between Christ and His Church. This grace-filled sacramental reality is completely distinct from the civil contract approved by the secular government when it issues a marriage license. Obviously, no matter how wide-spread same-sex “marriage” becomes in the United States, it will be impossible for the Catholic Church to ever witness, bless, or sanction these relationships in any way.