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Abp. Wuerl's gay marriage fight challenged

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NCR Today

Francis deBernardo, Executive Director of New Ways Ministry, a national Catholic ministry of justice and reconciliation for lesbian/gay Catholics and the wider church, has taken on Archbishop Donald Wuerl of Washington, DC, for his opposition to the legalization of sex marriage in the District of Columbia.

Archbishop Wuerl has joined forces with some Baptist African-American clergy in calling for a referendum in the District that would define marriage as "one man, one woman."

Earlier this year, the City Council of Washington, DC voted to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other jurisdictions, and the council is planning to vote in the fall on legalizing same-sex unions in the District itself.

According to *The Washington Post*, Archbishop Wuerl sent a letter to all 300 priests of the archdiocese, and has launched his own personal campaign in the media.

In an interview, DeBernardo said, "Archbishop Wuerl is wrong in claiming that same sex unions weaken marriage. Same sex marriage will not weaken marriage; it will strengthen it because it provides protection for committed relationships across the board."

"Furthermore," he said, "the vote by the DC Council earlier this year, recognizing same-sex marriages performed elsewhere, showed that Catholics and other citizens of the District of Columbia are ready for same sex marriage. It will not shake the timbers of our social structure. And many Catholics support same sex marriage as a social justice issue. Without it, in fact, many children are at risk."

He noted that the archbishop has been fairly silent on this issue until recently. "I would call on the archbishop to meet personally with gay and lesbian couples to hear about the reality of their lives," he

said.

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