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Maryland governor: Same-sex marriage is about rights, dignity

Jerry Filteau | Mar. 21, 2012

BALTIMORE -- Legalizing same-sex marriage is about protecting human rights and dignity, Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley told a national gathering of about 400 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics on March 16.

A little more than two weeks before, O'Malley, a Democrat and a Catholic, had signed into law a bill allowing same-sex marriage in the state of Maryland.

The governor received a standing ovation when he arrived to give a luncheon speech at the Seventh Annual Symposium on Catholicism and Homosexuality, and an even longer ovation at the end of his brief talk.

Speaking on "the dignity of every individual," he said, "I think at the end of the day, all of us want the same thing for our kids. We want our children to grow up in caring conditions and loving homes, protected equally under the law.

"And for many people of many different faiths, for people committed to the principle of religious freedom and individual freedom, the way forward is always found through greater respect for the equal rights of all, for the human dignity of all," he added. "Our success in this recent debate in the Maryland General Assembly was a success that was based on these fundamental beliefs, these fundamental principles that we share, foremost among them being our belief in the dignity of every individual."

"The very reason for Marlyand's founding was for religious freedom, and at the heart of religious freedom is respect for freedom of individual conscience," O'Malley said. "In Maryland, we were able to find a way to protect individuals' civil marriage rights and religious freedom."

The symposium in Baltimore was sponsored by New Ways Ministry, an unofficial national Catholic ministry to LGBT Catholics.

The Maryland Catholic Conference was among those that strongly opposed the same-sex marriage law, and opponents are expected to gather enough signatures to require it to go to a popular referendum this November.

O'Malley acknowledged that a referendum challenging the law is likely but said he believes the voters will "come down on the side of human dignity" and affirm the law.

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