

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

November 12, 2012 at 12:03pm

The church should stop trying to pray the gay away

by John McCarthy

NCR Today

Editor's note: John McCarthy, an advocate for youth engagement in the political process, is a new blogger for NCR Today. [Read more about him.](#)

On Election Day, many people of faith cast their votes for marriage equality in Washington state, Minnesota, Maryland and Maine. The day after, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, said: "November 6, was a disappointing day for marriage ... I especially call on all people to pray and to build a renewed culture of marriage and the family. This is a fundamental task on which the future good and stability of our society, and particularly that of our children, rest."

Is anyone else tired of this "batten down the hatches and pray for stability" approach?

It is due time that the Catholic church changes the way we talk about civil marriage equality. Catholics in the pews are finding it more and more difficult to apply their faith in practice when the teachings from the pulpit don't reflect the realities of life. The good and stability of our everyday lives will not be hindered by same-sex marriage. Gay people aren't going to turn more people gay. Lesbians will not show up at anyone's door looking to recruit. When marriage equality is a national norm, very little in average American life will change -- but for so many of our brothers and sisters, their lives will be changed for the better.

The fight for marriage equality isn't about changing families: It's about strengthening responsible ones. What's good for society? Two people publicly committing to love and care for each other while providing a caring home for children. With so many marriages ending in divorce and so many families being broken up, we need more couples fighting for their marriages with the same intensity that same-sex couples are.

If we keep using this us-against-them mentality, we're going to keep alienating people from the church and act as a barrier between individuals and God's love. I'm not telling anyone to change a sacrament. I'm not demanding that the church change anything. But let's be realistic about same-sex relationships and stop acting like couples committing to each other will hurt American families.

As a church, we must work toward an inclusive faith community that understands that we are not experts on the human experience. We're working together to understand our communal roles

I say we join Cordileone's call to pray for the strengthening of families -- but let's pray for the strengthening of all families and stop pretending that the term "family" is one-size-fits-all.

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