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Archbishop says US church must 'redouble' efforts on marriage issue

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Just shy of a week after laws permitting same-sex marriage passed in three states and voters in a fourth rejected an amendment to define marriage as a union of one man and one woman, San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone said Election Day "was a disappointing day for marriage."

The chairman of the Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage told the U.S. bishops Monday at their annual fall general assembly in Baltimore that traditional marriage also faces probable challenges on the judicial front.

Voters in Maine, Washington state and Maryland approved ballot measures legalizing same-sex marriage Nov. 6, while Minnesota voters rejected a state constitutional amendment to uphold the traditional definition of marriage, opening the door for the Legislature and the courts to consider legalizing same-sex marriage there. Maine's referendum to authorize same-sex marriage reversed a 2009 referendum that banned such marriages.

The election results are "a symptom of a much larger problem," basically that "people don't understand what marriage is," Cordileone said at a news conference following the session where he presented his report.

In delivering his report, he praised the work of the bishops in those four states to defend the traditional definition of marriage, drawing applause from the bishops in the assembly meeting room.

"In all these states where we did not succeed, we were outspent," he said. In Washington, for example, supporters of the legalization measure outspent opponents by 12 to 1, said the archbishop.

Reporting on the work of his subcommittee, Cordileone also talked about the progress of the catechetical efforts on the theological and natural law basis of Catholic teaching that marriage is between one man and one woman for the purpose of developing a family.

The website Marriage: Unique for a Reason [1] is regularly updated with blog posts and new information, he reported. The newest in a series of videos intended to explain church teaching will soon be ready. The first in the series to be produced in Spanish with themes directed at Latinos, *El matrimonio, hecho para el amor y la vida* ("Marriage, made for love and life"), is in the final stages of production, he said.

Some clips of that video shown during the meeting tell a family story of an unmarried couple spending the weekend with the young man's grandparents as they celebrate 50 years of marriage.

Cordileone noted that the U.S. Supreme Court is thought likely to take up one of several cases challenging the constitutionality of the federal Defense of Marriage Act, passed with bipartisan support and signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996. It defines marriage as "a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife."

The Obama administration has stopped defending the law in court and several federal courts have found its definition unconstitutional.

Those cases or any of several other pending cases related to marriage could redefine marriage throughout the country, he said, warning they could have implications for religious liberty "in serious and unforeseen ways."

A ruling that redefines marriage nationwide would be "the Roe decision for marriage," he said, in a reference to *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 ruling that legalized abortion virtually on demand in every state.

But Cordileone offered words of encouragement, saying, "This work is not in vain." He noted that the same-sex marriages measures approved by voters in those states where the issue was on the ballot passed by a small margin.

"This is not a time to give up, but rather a time to redouble our efforts," he said.

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Links:
[1] http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/