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R.I.'s same-sex marriage law is 'serious injustice,' archbishop says

by Catholic News Service

Providence, R.I. — The legalization of same-sex marriage in Rhode Island on Thursday was described as a "serious injustice" by the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage.

"The meaning of marriage cannot be redefined, because its meaning lies in our very nature. Therefore, regardless of what law is enacted, marriage remains the union of one man and one woman -- by the very design of nature, it cannot be otherwise," said Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, subcommittee chairman.

Rhode Island became the 10th state to allow same-sex marriages after Gov. Lincoln Chafee signed the bill into law May 2 following a final 56-15 vote in the House. The law will take effect Aug. 1.

Bishop Thomas Tobin of Providence, R.I., expressed his opposition to the legislation in a letter to the state's Catholics posted on the website of the Providence diocese May 2. The letter will appear in the May 9 edition of *The Rhode Island Catholic* newspaper.

In the letter, the bishop said he was "profoundly disappointed" with the decision to legalize same-sex marriage and noted that the Catholic church "fought very hard to oppose this immoral and unnecessary proposition."

He stressed that the church continues to have "respect, love and pastoral concern for our brothers and sisters who have same-sex attraction" but he said this pastoral care does not mean "we are free to endorse or ignore immoral or destructive behavior."

"At this moment of cultural change," he wrote, "it is important to affirm the teaching of the church." Quoting the Catechism of the Catholic Church, he added: "Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and always sinful."

The bishop said same-sex marriages are "clearly contrary to God's plan for the human family, and therefore objectively sinful." He also said Catholics should "examine their consciences very carefully before deciding whether or not to endorse same-sex relationships or attend same-sex ceremonies, realizing that to do so might harm their relationship with God and cause significant scandal to others."

The bishop also noted that decision to legalize same-sex marriage was "a disappointment for many of us, but it is also an opportunity to be steadfast and courageous, and to renew our commitment to Christ and his church."

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