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Hawaii bishop urges Catholics to mobilize against same-sex marriage

by Patrick Downes by Catholic News Service

Honolulu — Bishop Larry Silva of Honolulu urged Catholics across the island state to oppose same-sex marriage in an "urgent request" to pastors.

In a letter that was included in parish bulletins the weekend of Aug. 24-25, Silva asked Catholics to pray the rosary daily over the next several weeks, "if possible" while walking around the state Capitol block, "so that just as God tumbled down the walls of Jericho, he will be able to do so through the prayers and action of his beloved people."

The bishop said quick action is required because Gov. Neil Abercrombie "is considering calling a special session of the legislature to consider the issue of same-sex marriage."

"This could happen any day," the bishop said.

The bishop himself sent a separate 1,000-word letter to state senators and representatives on Aug. 22 urging them to reject any effort to legalize same-sex marriage in Hawaii, to protect traditional marriage and to prevent religious freedom from being eroded by same-sex marriage legislation.

Silva also sent state lawmakers a copy of his letter to Catholics.

The bishop said his letter to parishioners, at more than 1,200 words, was long because it was necessary to "clarify certain issues."

Silva argued that the prohibition of same-sex marriage was a "just" form of legal discrimination (as opposed to "unjust discrimination") necessary to protect the true nature of marriage.

"If same-sex marriage becomes the law, it will become 'normal' or the norm for our land," he said, leading to school textbooks that will portray homosexual attraction as "normal." Anyone who believes otherwise could be identified as bigots, he said.

The bishop also suggested that same-sex marriage could lead to the legalization of other variations of marriage, including polygamy and incest.

Silva indicated that the legalization of same-sex marriage would threaten religious freedom.

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"Would churches that refuse to celebrate same-sex marriage because of deeply held religious convictions be deprived of the freedom to live those convictions?" he asked.

"Would Christians, Muslims, and others who believe that homosexual acts are contrary to God's law be persecuted for holding on to those beliefs?" he said.

The bishop also issued a grim warning about children.

"Children will be the greatest casualties in that they will be deprived of being raised in a loving home by a mother and a father who loves them and whose love cooperated with God's plan in creating them," Silva wrote. "When children are deprived of such a home, there will be more poverty, more social ills, more juvenile suicides, and more problems than we can imagine."

Silva likened the "language of the proponents" of same-sex marriage espousing "civil rights" to the "serpent's manipulative promise" to Adam and Eve that led to original sin.

"Do not be led astray with such language, and do not allow yourself to be bullied by it," the bishop said.

He concluded by asking for prayers and action in contacting lawmakers, urging courtesy and charity in any messages shared with them.

"Pray for a change of heart and the formation of an informed conscience, and let your love be the most powerful agent of change," he wrote. "After all, God is love!"

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