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U.S. Bishops: "DOMA Ruling 'Renewed Our Determination' to Defend True Marriage"

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BALTIMORE, November 13, 2013 (LifeSiteNews.com) - The archbishop who leads the U.S. bishops' fight against same-sex "marriage" says the U.S. Supreme Court's June rulings on marriage has renewed the bishops' determination to defend true marriage.

In an address at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) annual General Assembly on November 11th, Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco lampooned the Supreme Court's twin decisions of June 26th that ruled unconstitutional the definition of true marriage in the Defense of Marriage Act, and found the Prop. 8 backers had no standing to defend the California law.

According to Cordileone, who chairs the USCCB's Subcommittee on the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, the rulings were "the most significant judicial decisions on marriage this country has ever experienced."

"By advancing redefinition, the decisions harmed marriage and harmed our society," he said, noting they produced negative effects "almost immediately."

"At the same time these decisions have renewed our determination to witness to the truth that marriage can only be the union of a man and a woman," he continued. "We know that our teachings on marriage and family reflect the life-affirming message of the Gospel, and we know that strengthening a marriage culture serves the common good of our country."

"We are no doubt at a critical point in this country when it comes to the promotion and defense of marriage in the law," he said.

The language of the DOMA decision was "particularly disheartening" and sets "troubling precedent for increasing efforts to redefine marriage," he said. The decision "is now being used to challenge marriage laws in more than a dozen states that still recognize marriage as the union of one man and one woman."

On the Prop. 8 ruling, he lamented that the measure's backers were left to defend it because the state refused. "Increasingly we are witnessing public officials placing their opinions over the laws they are charged to defend," he said. "In the area of marriage this has happened in a striking way with DOMA, Proposition 8, and in other jurisdictions with respect to marriage laws."

In the question and answer period after his address, Bishop Felipe Estevez asked Cordileone how to address the fact that while young people are trending pro-life they are also turning against belief in true marriage.

In response, Cordileone suggested we may eventually experience a similar change on the marriage issue as we have on the pro-life front.

"At the time of the Roe decision, everyone thought the whole country was going to go toward a pro-abortion way of thinking and that all the young people were on board with that. But over time when we saw the devastation that has been done, the young people have turned around," he said.

"We're in a similar moment with regard to marriage, and I think in time people will see the decimation of family life that's been going on for a long time," he continued. "We can challenge them to think things through thoroughly as the generation before them did on the pro-life effort."

National Catholic Reporter accuses Cordileone of ignoring Pope Francis' message

At the National Catholic Reporter, a leftist newspaper that uses the name "Catholic" in defiance of its local bishop, Michael Sean Winters accused Cordileone of not falling into line with Pope Francis' "pastoral vision."

"+Cordileone is still at the barricades in the culture wars," wrote Winters, who attended the plenary on behalf of NCR. "This summer the pope, when asked about a gay monsignor, said, 'who am I to judge?' This was widely reported. Apparently, albeit unreported, the Holy Father intended to leave judgment to +Cordileone."

At a press conference Monday after Cordileone's address, Winters accused the bishops of favouring the Republican Party in its "Call to Prayer" campaign, which focuses on promoting a culture of life, marriage, and religious liberty through various spiritual initiatives.

"A cynic would notice that those are three issues that in the public discussion line up conveniently with the Republican Party platform, and wonder about the absence of, say, immigration reform," said Winters. "Wednesday's the nine month anniversary of the election of Pope Francis. Was there any consideration to adding poverty to the list, and if not, is its absence not somewhat concerning?"

In response, Cordileone denied any partisan motivations and insisted that they are focusing on life, marriage, and religious liberty because these are "foundational" issues.

"First I would say, if they line up with the Republican platform, it's inconveniently, not conveniently," he said.

"Our Catholic vision of life would certainly include issues of immigration, issues of poverty, issues of religious persecution," he continued. "We're not approaching this from a political perspective because if you take the full range of issues that are being debated on the political table, we're across the spectrum on those issues. We see these issues as foundational, understanding life not in a narrow perspective, but including a lot of issues, affirming human dignity from conception to natural death and every condition that people find themselves in."