



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF ENGLAND AND WALES
39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX

Letter to all Parish priests in England and Wales

16 January 2013

Dear Father,

Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Bill

As you will know, the Government will be imminently introducing a Bill in Parliament to redefine marriage.

Very many people within and beyond the Catholic community made their opposition to this clear last year when the proposal was announced. Over 600,000 people signed a petition and many contacted their MPs. Recently over 1,000 priests signed an open letter opposing the Bill.

The time has now arrived when MPs will shortly be voting on whether or not to support this fundamental change in the law. The bishops and others have strongly urged all political parties to offer all MPs a free vote on this matter of conscience and this has now been agreed by the party leaders.

It is therefore particularly important at this time for all MPs to be made aware of the strength of feeling on this issue among their own constituents, and the Bishops have received requests from a number of laity about mobilising further action. My purpose in writing is to ask you to urge the members of your congregation to make their own views known to their MP. To assist them in doing that we have printed postcards "speak out for marriage" and a bundle of these are with this letter. Parishioners simply need to add the name of their own local MP to the address on the front of the card, and their own name and address below the text on the back. Please can you put up the enclosed posters, let your parishioners know the name(s) of your local MP, and strongly encourage your parishioners to send the cards and to give them to their friends to send in as well.

People may of course wish to write their own letters or emails. To assist them, more detailed information and briefing can be found on the Bishops' Conference website.

The first key vote is likely to take place in early February so the time to act is now. We need to encourage as many people as possible to get involved. Please do all you can.

With my gratitude and thanks for your help in this important matter,

The Most Revd. Peter Smith, LL.B., J.C.D.
Archbishop of Southwark
Vice President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales