

## **Defending matrimony**

### ***N.C. bishops join in call for constitutional amendment on marriage***

RALEIGH — North Carolina's two Catholic bishops joined dozens of religious leaders, state lawmakers and traditional-values activists in seeking an amendment to North Carolina's constitution defining marriage as the union only of a man and a woman.

Charlotte Bishop Peter J. Jugis and Raleigh Bishop Michael F. Burbidge took part in a news conference at the Legislative Building in Raleigh Feb. 24.

The gathering, organized by NC4Marriage Coalition, was to support the Defense of Marriage bill introduced in the state Senate and soon to be introduced in the state House.

The Senate bill not only calls for an amendment to the state constitution to define marriage as the union only of a man and woman, it would prohibit other types of unions that imitate marriage, such as civil unions or domestic partnerships.

It also would prohibit legal recognition of same-sex unions performed in other states. Supporters say North Carolina is the only state south of Washington, D.C., and east of New Mexico without such an amendment.

A rally in support of the amendment is scheduled to take place in Raleigh March 3.

During the news conference, Bishop Jugis read a statement on behalf of both bishops in support of the proposed amendment. The statement addressed "the theological basis for upholding the traditional understanding of marriage in North Carolina."

"Throughout the entirety of sacred Scripture, marriage is always and only recognized as a union between a man and a woman," said Bishop Jugis. "We believe this understanding of marriage is the only one that should constitutionally exist in our state."

The bishops' statement also addressed the issue of homosexual attraction.

"We wish to affirm our church's belief that men and women with a homosexual attraction are children of God possessed of human dignity because they too are created in God's image," said Bishop Jugis.

"Protecting the traditional understanding of marriage is not intended to disparage our brothers and sisters with a homosexual attraction," said the bishop. "Rather, it is intended to affirm a divinely-ordered reality that cannot be changed because it comes from God."

According to the North Carolina constitution, the legislature first must authorize a proposed amendment before it is placed before the citizens of North Carolina for a vote.

Since 2004, bills have been introduced in the state's General Assembly to protect marriage by placing an amendment on the constitution that defines marriage as between a

man and a woman. To date, they have been blocked for debate by legislative leaders who claim no amendment is needed because marriage is already limited by state law.

If the recently-introduced bill passes in Raleigh, it would go to voters in November.

Bishops Jugis and Burbidge called on the Catholics of their dioceses, and all who embrace traditional marriage, to join in support of the proposed amendment by contacting their legislators and asking them to help bring it to a vote.

**WANT MORE INFO?**

A rally to support the amendment is scheduled for Tuesday, March 3, at 11 a.m. at the Halifax Mall, 16 W. Jones St., Raleigh. Details, including a map, are available at [www.catholicvoicenc.org](http://www.catholicvoicenc.org).