

ONTARIO CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

To: Diocesan Marriage Contacts

Re: Update #15, April 25, 2005

Status of Bill C-38

The government has tried several times to bring the debate to a conclusion but there are still speakers who want to put their case. This week parliament is in recess. It appears that it will be perhaps mid-May before there is a vote on second reading and referral to the Committee. There is a good chance that this parliament may not survive much longer than the end of May.

There is also confusion about the procedures being planned by the Legislative Committee. Paul Martin is alleged to have promised hearings but it is claimed that the Committee sets its own rules and wants only limited hearings devoted to technical matters.

Celebration and Catechesis

On a more positive note the Advisory Committee on Marriage has suggested that we should embark on a celebration of, and some teaching about, marriage for the month of June, which begins the “marriage season” in our churches.

The Committee has suggested two ideas, which we can discuss on our next conference call. They are:

- Some kind of celebration in every parish, such as a blessing, or a renewal of vows, or a talk, or a supper, or petitions to mark the importance of marriage and to ask for God’s blessing on those who are married and those about to be married.

St. Mary’s parish in Barrie organized a special Mass for married couples. It was held on a Friday evening and was very well attended. The homilist developed the theme that without committed married couples there would be no parish.

- The development of a one-page summary on the basic teaching of the Church with regard to marriage and the family that could be used as a bulletin insert.

These projects would be a contribution to the ongoing work that needs to be done now and far into the future if Catholic sacramental marriage is to be truly understood and appreciated.

National Task Force

The Task Force is continuing its work. It has developed a letter to be sent to all bishops urging them to publish in all their parishes a bulletin insert which will draw attention to the publication from the Catholic Office for Life and the Family called, “Does Marriage

Have to be Re-defined in Canada”. This document consists of twelve short marriage memos which outline the teaching of the Church and giving reasons why marriage does not need to change.

Form Letters from Federal MP’s

Those of you who have written to your federal Liberal MP’s about marriage will probably have received the same three-page form letter that I received from mine. It is bad enough that we are treated so off-handedly but I was really surprised to find that the President of the Conference received exactly the same letter from the office of the Attorney General of Canada. One size fits all!

Tom Reilly