

## ONTARIO CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

To: Diocesan Marriage Contacts

**Re: Update #5, January 30, 2005**

### Statement by the Hon. Pierre Pettigrew

Attached to this update you will find a press release issued on Friday, January 28, 2005, in response to the statement by the Hon. Hon Pierre Pettigrew that the Catholic Church, which means all of us, should not participate in the public discussion on marriage. Coming from a senior minister of the government this is an extraordinary declaration in a democracy. It is difficult to discern what the motivation might be. However, it is clear that we do have a right to participate and we will make use of it.

### Further Statements by Bishops and Others

Statements have been released by Archbishop Gervais of Ottawa and Archbishop Meagher of Kingston. They will be on the OCCB web site this week. Fr. Tom Rosica made a statement in the last week on Salt and Light TV. It will also be on the web site. In every case, the value of marriage as we have known it, to our society is emphasized. Heterosexual marriage can be preserved and all other interdependent relationships given their due.

### The Pamphlet on Church Teaching on Marriage

The pamphlet has now been distributed by the printer. It has either arrived in dioceses or is on its way. We are almost entirely out of English copies but we do have a number of French still available. We would suggest that you send a copy to your local MPs and MPPs at their riding offices. We will send copies directly to the parliament building in Ottawa and to the Legislature. We will also send copies to the provincial and national media. It would be a good idea to send copies to local media outlets.

### The Federal Government Legislation

The government says that it will table the legislation as soon as the House of Commons resumes. It has promised that the legislation will contain robust protection for religious groups. Since they have no authority over solemnization or provincial human rights codes, it will be interesting to see how they propose to do this. If it is not done in a convincing manner then they must be taken to task immediately. It will quickly become apparent how much debate they are prepared to allow. We need to be prepared to stay the course in putting forward our point of view.

Tom Reilly