

# Archbishop decries marriage ruling

BOSTON (CNS) — Boston Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley said the Supreme Judicial Court's expanded ruling on gay marriage is "more troubling" than its initial decision.

The court's Nov. 18 decision struck down Massachusetts' opposite-sex-only marriage laws, but the new ruling, issued Feb. 4, declared that same-sex couples have the right to get married.

The 4-3 ruling, delivered in an advisory opinion sought by the state Senate, "clearly demonstrates the overly activist stance of the four-judge majority," said the archbishop in a Feb. 5 statement. He also said the justices who issued the opinion "seem determined to blur the constitutional separation of powers and to usurp the rightful role of the Legislature."

After the November ruling the state Senate was considering a bill that would have given same-sex couples all the "protections, benefits and obligations of civil marriage" but would have called the unions something else. But, before voting on the measure, the Senate asked the court if the bill would comply with its Nov. 18 ruling. In its Feb. 4 opinion the court said no.

"This court's majority answer de-



William B. Plowman/CNS

**Demonstrators defend traditional marriage during a rally at the Massachusetts Statehouse in Boston Feb. 8. The state's Supreme Judicial Court recently ruled that same-sex couples have the right to marry.**

serves a commensurately strong response," added Archbishop O'Malley.

He noted that legislators "must reclaim their appropriate place in debating and enacting laws that address so fundamental a societal

building block" as marriage, which "has been, is and always will be a union between a man and a woman."

The Boston archbishop urged Catholics and all those who value the "traditional, positive and forthright understanding of marriage" to take

action against the ruling by contacting their state senators and representatives to point out their concern and urge them to support an amendment to the state constitution that would define marriage as an institution for a man and woman only.

The ruling, which takes effect this May, notes that a bill that would sanction civil unions, such as the one Vermont now has, "maintains an unconstitutional, inferior and discriminatory status for same-sex couples."

Opponents of the Massachusetts ruling have started lobbying for the Marriage Affirmation and Protection Amendment, but even if this amendment is approved by the Legislature it won't appear on the ballot until 2006.

An initial vote by lawmakers on a marriage amendment was scheduled for Feb. 11. In Massachusetts, the amendment approval process requires two consecutive votes by lawmakers to approve it before it would be placed on the ballot to be voted on by residents.

Under the Supreme Judicial Court's expanded ruling, the state will be required to issue marriage licenses to qualified same-sex couples beginning May 16.

## Catholic Family Center, Lifespan study merger

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — Catholic Family Center and Lifespan of Greater Rochester Inc. are studying the possibility of merging, officials for both agencies said.

The Center for Governmental Research, a public-policy analysis organization, is conducting the six-month study. The study will examine whether a merger would streamline and improve services both agencies currently offer to the aging. Members of both agencies' boards and staffs are participating in the study.

Founded in 1971, Lifespan provides information, guidance and other services to older adults. CFC offers human services to a variety of constituencies, and has an elder-services department. Should a merger take place, it is likely Lifespan would become a part of CFC, an agency of diocesan Catholic Charities, according to Carolyn Portanova, CFC's president and chief executive officer.

CFC already collaborates with Lifespan on the Eldersource program, which provides information, guidance and care-management ser-

vices for older adults and their caregivers. The collaboration began in 1998, according to Fran Weisberg, Lifespan's president and chief executive officer. Among Eldersource's features is a hotline at 585/325-2800 and a Web site at [www.eldersource.org](http://www.eldersource.org) that people can use to learn about a variety of non-medical support services.

"Thousands of phone calls later, we're probably one of the strongest collaboratives in the community," Weisberg said of Eldersource's history.

Portanova noted that a merger would not produce "big savings" for either agency, but would allow them to combine their resources in such areas as administration and finance, and expand services to the elderly.

"We would move money (saved) into services," Portanova said.

Portanova and Weisberg emphasized that both CFC and Lifespan are financially sound. However, the two presidents pointed-out that the Monroe County government has slashed funding to human-service agencies over the past few years, and that such private sources of funding as the United Way have experienced de-

creasing donation amounts. Portanova added that CFC was forced to eliminate an elder-services counseling program last year due to funding cuts. Hence, uniting forces and combining services makes sense, especially since both agencies must muster all the resources they have to serve the region's growing elderly population, the two executive directors said.

"We want to build a more comprehensive community elder-care system and not be fragmented," Weisberg said. She added that Eldersource has already turned the agencies, which were once "competitors," into collaborators.

Weisberg cited a slew of statistics to buttress her contention that both agencies need to prepare themselves for the wave of baby boomers reaching retirement. On the national level, the federal government projects that the number of people 65 and older is expected to increase from almost 35 million currently to 70 million by 2030. Weisberg added that people over 65 are now living much longer than they did a generation ago.

"Eighty percent of those retiring

at 60 will need to work or want to work," Weisberg said. "There is no demographic group in this nation that has grown as much and changed as much as the aging."

Portanova stressed that both agencies have a common mission to serve the aging, and held many discussions about their shared values when they created Eldersource. Hence, she didn't foresee any conflicts that could adversely affect a possible merger.

"We're in an exciting place to move forward to the next step," she said.

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