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Office of Communications

## ***News Release***

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### **Bishop Michael F. Burbidge Responds to Supreme Court Rulings**

The Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge expressed grave disappointment at the decision by the U.S. Supreme Court on June 26, 2013, to overturn the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) that was passed overwhelmingly by Congress and signed into law by President Clinton. The Act upheld the correct definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Catholic teaching holds that marriage is a union established by God and endowed by God with its own proper nature and laws that predate both government and religion.

Bishop Burbidge stated, "The decision of the Court will contribute to the unraveling of what has been a vital cornerstone of our society, the protection of the rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives to one another and to the children they bring into the world."

The ruling that DOMA is unconstitutional allows the federal government to recognize any same-sex marriage legally recognized by state law as being equal to a marriage between one man and one woman. It will likely open the door to further challenges regarding religious freedom regarded as part of our Constitutional identity as a nation.

The DOMA ruling and the ruling on Proposition 8 and their implications for North Carolina state law are currently under review for further clarification. If necessary, further comment will be forthcoming when this process is complete.

While the Church does not support the redefinition of marriage, Catholic teaching holds that all people are created in the image and likeness of God and possess an innate human dignity that must be acknowledged and respected, including those who have same-sex attraction. No form of discrimination or prejudice is ever acceptable in our society and every effort must be made to ensure that these violations of human dignity are eradicated.

Given the Supreme Court's decision, Bishop Burbidge said, "The Catholic Church will continue to hold to its teaching that marriage is the faithful and exclusive union of one man and one woman, and one which is open to the gift of children, in accord with God's design and in keeping with the very nature of this sacred vocation."

In a statement released by Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, chair of the U.S. Bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage, they stated, "The common good of all, especially our children, depends upon a society that strives to uphold the truth of marriage. Now is the time to redouble our efforts in witness to this truth. These decisions are part of a public debate of great consequence."

"I ask that you join me in praying for those entering into and witnessing to this vocation of sacred married life," Bishop Burbidge said, "and I also ask that you pray that whatever divisions may have occurred or will occur as a result of the Supreme Court's ruling, may be healed by the grace of God and a mutual renewed commitment by all people of good will, so that we may together build a society reflective of the unity that is ours as members of God's family."