

**RESPONSE TO CALIFORNIA SUPREME  
COURT RULING ON MARRIAGE PROPOSITION**  
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**Friday, May 16, 2008**

*The following is an excerpt from a homily delivered by Bishop Jaime Soto during the opening Mass at the California Knights of Columbus State Convention in San Jose, California.*

Yesterday, the California Supreme Court overturned the will of the California voters when it reversed Proposition 22 that recognized marriage as the union of a man and a woman. The timidity of the courts must not be our own. The legal concession to a political fad is discouraging and dismaying. It is also alarming, in that it rings the alarm that reminds us of the task to bring the reason and right of the gospel into the public discourse about the society we hope to build.

The action of the courts removes the language to speak of that which is an essential building block of society, the sacred union of a man and woman for the sake of creating a family. Legally, the courts have said that there is no word to define this. In doing this it also claims that the state will remain neutral with regards to what constitutes a family. In other words, our own values and vision about the family is now deemed private.

While we must continue to engage both legal and legislative opportunities for discourse on this issue as well as many other social issues with grave moral impact, it is important for us to understand that the dialogue is a much broader one. We must persuade hearts and minds and not just judges and politicians. We fall into a trap that limits our moral language to a political and legal lexicon. Often times we come across as those who are against, as the group that always says no. Even our own Catholic community can become convinced of this so they prefer to remain quiet so as not to appear so negative.

Ultimately, the gospel we preach and the gospel we are called to live is a gospel of life. It is a gospel that says "yes" to life. Our "no" is defined by our "yes" not the other way around. As Pope Benedict has told us, ours is a message of hope because it is ultimately rooted in the love of God made manifest, made public, through the person of Jesus.

This is true not only about the marriage issue but also many of the other social issues that challenges the Catholic community today: the prolonged plague of abortion, the threat of legalized euthanasia, stem cell research, the conduct of the war, the death penalty as well as other more complex but no less moral challenges such as immigration reform, health care, and the environment.

These are public issues and we possess a very public faith that should not shy away from letting its light shine. Pope Benedict reminded during his recent visit, "To the extent that religion becomes a purely private affair, it loses its very soul."

Perhaps Jesus has even made this even clearer for us, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the Gospel will save it."