

Catholics unite for California marriage vote; Knights give \$1 million

SAN FRANCISCO - Catholics for the Common Good, the California Catholic Conference, the Knights of Columbus and other Catholic groups have formed CatholicsForProtectMarriage.com to help recruit Catholic volunteers and contributors for Proposition 8, which would overturn the California Supreme Court's ruling that same-sex couples have the right to designate their unions as marriages.

The Catholic effort is designed to support the broad-based ProtectMarriage.com coalition sponsoring Proposition 8. The coalition, also known as Yes on 8, needs \$20 million in contributions and tens of thousands of Catholic volunteers to defeat a well-financed opposition, said Bill May, chairman of Catholics for the Common Good.

"We're asking people to volunteer to help in parishes, to participate in telephoning, talking with neighbors," Mr. May said. "This is a really important issue. Marriage is the foundation of the family. People are very upset that the (state) Supreme Court overruled the will of the people."

May predicted the Yes on 8 campaign will be outspent 3-to-1. "The only way to really restore the definition of marriage is by volunteers getting active," he said.

Campaign finance reports as of Aug. 18 showed that since Aug. 1 the Yes on 8 campaign took in more than \$4.8 million, including \$1 million from the Knights of Columbus national headquarters.

The California Catholic Conference is directing Catholics who want to work on the campaign to the CatholicsForProtectMarriage.com Web page. Catholics who want to donate should do so through the main campaign Web site at ProtectMarriage.com, conference spokeswoman Carol Hogan said.

At the same time, the conference is asking each diocese to organize a campaign effort combining prayer, education, fundraising and volunteering. The bishops

announced their support for Proposition 8 Aug. 1, calling the high court's ruling a "radical change in public policy" that goes against the biological and organic reality of marriage and diminishes marriage to mean only an adult contractual partnership with no grounds necessarily in procreating and raising children.

In addition, the conference is recommending other teaching materials for parishes, including a July letter by San Bernardino Bishop Gerald R. Barnes on the theological basis of marriage. "The natural structure of human sexuality makes man and woman complementary partners for the transmission of human life," he wrote. "Only a union of male and female can express the sexual complementarity willed by God for marriage."

Proposition 8 "changes the California Constitution to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry in California" and "provides that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California," according to the ballot title and summary approved by state Attorney General Jerry Brown.

The language might not be the most precise or complete description of the measure but is accurate and substantially complies with the law, Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Timothy Frawley ruled Aug. 7 in rejecting a protest by Proposition 8 supporters of Brown's title wording.