

LA. bishops reiterate opposition to same-sex marriage

LOS ANGELES - As same-sex couples prepared to marry in California, the seven bishops of the Los Angeles Archdiocese reiterated that they “cannot approve of redefining marriage” as anything but the union of “a man and a woman in a committed relationship.”

The brief statement signed by Cardinal Roger M. Mahony and his six auxiliary bishops was issued hours before California counties were to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples under a ruling of the California Supreme Court. The court ordered the ruling to become final June 16 at 5 p.m.

Condemning “all forms of violence, scorn and hatred - whether subtle or overt - against men and women who are homosexual,” the bishops said some of the benefits sought by same-sex couples “can already be obtained without regard to marital status.”

Among those they cited were joint property ownership and designation as a beneficiary in a will or as a health care decision-maker for a person who is declared incompetent.

“Other desired benefits such as sharing in a partner’s health insurance could be made available without the drastic step of a cultural or legal redefinition of marriage,” the bishops added.

The statement quoted from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and documents of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“When marriage is redefined so as to make other relationships equivalent to it, the institution of marriage is devalued and further weakened,” they said, quoting the U.S. bishops’ 2006 document, “Ministry to Persons With a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care.”

A measure on the California ballot this November would amend the state

constitution to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Twenty-six states have constitutional amendments or similar prohibitions on same-sex marriage.

The bishops' statement did not comment on the initiative but concluded, "Let us strengthen our resolve to respect the dignity of each human being and to protect the sanctity of marriage, asking God's guidance in our efforts to promote the common good central to a free and democratic society."

In addition to Cardinal Mahony it was signed by Auxiliary Bishops Thomas J. Curry, Gabino Zavala, Gerald E. Wilkerson, Edward W. Clark, Alexander Salazar and Oscar A. Solis.