



ARCHDIOCESE
of BALTIMORE
THE PREMIER SEE

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For immediate release

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**ARCHBISHOP CELEBRATES ASH WENESDAY MASSES, DECLARES
FRIDAY, MARCH 18 A DAY OF PRAYER AND FASTING FOR MARRIAGE**

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, Archbishop of Baltimore, is calling on Catholics in the Archdiocese of Baltimore to affirm traditional marriage by participating in a special day of prayer and fasting on Friday, March 18, 2011.

The Maryland House of Delegates is preparing to vote on a bill that would make Maryland only the sixth state in the nation to legalize same-sex marriage.

"The institution of marriage can only belong to the union of one man and one woman because nature – not social prejudice – has given this relationship the unique capacity to bring children into the world," Archbishop O'Brien said. "It is for this reason that religion and governments alike have bestowed special recognition upon this relationship for thousands of years.

"We commend those political leaders who have had the courage to stand by their convictions by voting to uphold our society's most fundamental institution...The value of marriage must not be abandoned for the sake of partisan politics or political gain. It is not too late for the members of the House of Delegates to hear from God's people and to vote in accordance with their true conscience to uphold marriage."

Archbishop O'Brien made the announcement on Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of Lent, the 40-day period when the Catholic Church asks the faithful to give themselves to prayer and to the reading of the Scripture, to fasting and to giving alms, in an effort to sharpen their senses and focus mind and heart on the reign of God. The rules for fasting and abstinence are posted at <http://www.archbalt.org/our-faith/catholic-resources/fast-abstinence.cfm>.

Archbishop O'Brien will celebrate Ash Wednesday Mass on March 9 at the Basilica of the Assumption (12:10 p.m.) and Cathedral of Mary Our Queen (5:30 p.m.).