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Prelate urges financial, grass-roots support for traditional marriage

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Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori and other religious leaders Sept. 26 asked supporters of traditional marriage to join efforts to overturn Maryland's new law legalizing same-sex marriage.

More than 200 people attended an invitation-only event at St. Mary's Seminary. The group included representatives from Christian, Muslim and Mormon communities, as well as written support from the Orthodox Jewish community, who were observing Yom Kippur.

Church leaders urged those in attendance to take their "feet to the street" and "get souls to the polls" to vote "no" on Question 6, the Maryland ballot referendum that seeks to legalize same-sex marriage.

Lori hosted the event as chairman of the Maryland Catholic Conference, the bishops' public policy arm. It was sponsored by the Maryland Marriage Alliance. The Catholic conference is a coalition partner of the alliance.

The conference's executive director, Mary Ellen Russell, and alliance chairman Derek McCoy also spoke at the event, as did the Rev. John Jenkins, pastor of First Baptist Church of Glenarden; the Rev. Frank Reid, pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church in Baltimore; and Martin Johnson, a leader in the Maple Ridge Bruderhof Community near Ulster Park, N.Y.

In Maryland, state lawmakers approved passed a measure to allow same-sex marriage in the state and it was signed into law by Gov. Martin O'Malley. But the law was put on hold after opponents got enough signatures to put the issue on the ballot for the Nov. 6 election.

Same-sex marriage is on the ballot in three other states as well. In Washington, a referendum seeking to overturn that state's same-sex marriage law is on the ballot. In Minnesota, voters will decide whether to pass a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. In Maine, voters will decide on an initiative on same-sex marriage, three years after a referendum overturned a law passed by the Legislature.

Lori in his remarks noted that the Bible opens and closes with images of marriage -- Adam and Eve in Genesis and the Book of Revelation's wedding feast of the lamb.

"The union of man and woman is not only good for the couple, but for the entire community of believers and for humanity, because marriage serves as a model and as a reference point for all that God calls humanity to be," Lori said.

The Catholic church and other faith traditions value marriage as a unique relationship reserved for one man and one woman because it can create children and it raises them in relationship with their biological mothers and fathers, Lori said.

"You can be for traditional marriage and be a loving person -- someone who wants what is best for society, what

is best for families, and what is best for children," he said.

Also attending the event were Bishop W. Francis Malooly of Wilmington, Del., which includes Maryland's Eastern Shore; Baltimore Auxiliary Bishops Denis J. Madden and Mitchell T. Rozanski; and Auxiliary Bishops Martin D. Holley and Barry C. Knestout of Washington. The Washington Archdiocese includes some Maryland counties.

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