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Thank you, Catholic voters

by Kate Childs Graham

NCR Today

In the struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality, yesterday was indeed a historic day. It was also a euphoric day, a metamorphic day, a day when joy rained down and hearts were transformed.

I want to thank every Catholic voter who voted for marriage equality at the polls. I know for some, it wasn't an easy decision. In Maine, Bishop Richard Malone said Catholics who support same-sex marriage are "unfaithful to Catholic doctrine." In Maryland, churchgoers were subjected to a letter from Baltimore Archbishop William Lori that concluded, "Each one of us -- as Catholics and faithful citizens -- must show up on Election Day and do our part by voting against Question 6." In Minnesota, the archdiocese chipped in upwards of \$1 million to ban same-sex marriage. And in Washington, Bishop Joseph Tyson said marriage equality is "actually offensive to basic human rights and equality."

Despite the cries of this minority, many Catholics banded together to show support for their LGBT sisters and brothers. In Maine, Catholics held prayer vigils in support of Question 1. In Maryland, Catholics held an illuminated rally at a basilica to encourage voters to vote for Question 6. In Minnesota, streets were dotted with signs that said, "Another Catholic Voting No." In Washington, more than 1,000 Catholics signed on to statewide ads to approve Referendum 74.

At the ballot box, you Catholic voters did what our faith commands: You followed your conscience. You voted with your heart. And for that, I can only say two words: Thank you.

Your votes, compounded by those of Presbyterians, Jews, Muslims, Lutherans, Baptists, Buddhists, atheists, Unitarian Universalists and more, were the deciding factor in yesterday's election. Your votes fended off a constitutional amendment that limited the right to marriage in Minnesota. And your votes affirmed marriage equality at ballot boxes in Maine, Washington and my home state, Maryland.

As we celebrate these victories, these conversions, we must prepare for the next step on our journey towards fairness. Not only must we begin to organize and proselytize in those states that have not yet heeded the call of progress, we must bring that call to the pews.

In Maryland, marriage equality advocates were quick to remind voters that marriage equality posed no threat to religious freedom. Take this ad, for instance:

I look forward to a day when fairness for my family isn't seen as a threat to freedom for my religion, when all communities of faith -- including our Catholic community -- affirm same-sex unions.

That day can't happen without some hard conversations and some hard work. So after the dust has settled and the celebrations have finished, let us band together like we did in Maine, Maryland, Minnesota and Washington. Let us do as scripture says. Let us "learn to do right, seek justice, encourage the oppressed," both in our communities and our church.

Catholic voters, again I say simply: Thanks.

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