

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Diocese of Phoenix Statement on City of Phoenix Proposed Human Relations Ordinance

February 25, 2013

As Catholics, we believe that all people are created in the image and likeness of God and thus possess an innate human dignity that must be acknowledged and respected. In keeping with this conviction, the Catholic Church teaches that all persons must be treated with compassion and respect. The Church, throughout its long history, has been a leading advocate for those who suffer from unjust discrimination, and has condemned all forms of hostility, scorn or malice towards any individual on the basis of race, nationality, sex, religion, disability, orientation or identity.

Accordingly, the Diocese of Phoenix strongly applauds and supports any sincere and well-intentioned effort to protect the human dignity of all people. In the very near future, however, the City of Phoenix is scheduled to consider a proposed ordinance that purports to protect individuals from unjust discrimination, but which is so broadly worded that it risks trampling the religious liberties of Phoenix citizens for doing nothing more than living their faith. As written, the proposed ordinance could be interpreted as forcing people to actively endorse, support and promote actions and behaviors that violate their own personal, deeply held religious beliefs. By failing to provide a clear means by which individuals may, in good conscience and without malice, practice their faith and live their values without fear of prosecution and punishment, the proposed “non-discrimination” ordinance actually could be used as a means to codify and mandate unjust discrimination against people of faith. Such a result would clearly run afoul of the time-honored tradition of religious freedom on which our nation was founded.

The Diocese of Phoenix supports all efforts to protect the dignity of all persons, from conception to natural death. It is our fervent hope that the City of Phoenix will similarly support the rights and religious liberties of all individuals and religious organizations. We call upon the Phoenix City Council to acknowledge and protect the conscience rights of all people to live and act according to their faith and values.

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