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Vatican criticizes US theologian's book on sexual ethics

By Jerry Filteau
National Catholic Reporter
June 4, 2012

The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has sharply criticized *Just Love*, an award-winning book on sexual ethics by Mercy Sr. Margaret Farley, a prominent Catholic theologian at Yale University.

"Among the many errors and ambiguities in this book are its positions on masturbation, homosexual acts, homosexual unions, the indissolubility of marriage and the problem of divorce and remarriage," the congregation's five-page "Notification" said.

In those areas, it said, the author's position "contradicts" or "is opposed to" or "does not conform to" church teaching.

Made public Monday but dated March 30, the Notification was approved by Pope Benedict XVI and signed by U.S. Cardinal William J. Levada, prefect of the congregation, and Archbishop Luis F. Ladaria, its secretary.

Farley said, "Although my responses to some particular sexual ethical questions do depart from some traditional Christian responses, I have tried to show that they nonetheless reflect a deep co-

herence with the central aims and insights of these theological and moral traditions."

While the Notification briefly quotes her conclusions on each of the five specific topics that are singled out, followed by a brief summation how those conclusions depart from the church's teaching, Farley said the congregation's critique "does not also consider my arguments for these positions" or the "complex theoretical and practical contexts to which they are a response."

In that way it "misrepresents – perhaps unwittingly – the aims of my work and the nature of it as a proposal that might be in service of, not against, the church and its faithful people," she said.



Sister Margaret Farley, RSM

Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics was published in 2006 by Continuum, an international publishing company specializing in scholarly works. The book argues that justice is a key quality in human sexual relationships because authentic love is formed, guided and protected by justice. In its core Chapter 6, "Framework for a Sexual Ethic: *Just Love*," among the topics treated are personhood, free consent, mutuality, equality, commitment, fruitfulness and social justice.

"Ultimately, in this book I propose a framework for sexual ethics that uses criteria of justice in evaluating true and faithful sexual relationships and activi-

ties," Farley said. "In doing so, I offer not only ideals for human sexual relations, but also some absolute requirements."

In 2008 she received the prestigious Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Religion for the book.

Now a professor emerita, Farley has taught Christian ethics for 50 years and began her career at Yale in 1971. She was the first female professor appointed full-time to the Yale Divinity School faculty. She and noted spiritual writer Henri Nouwen share the distinction of being the first Catholics ever on the school's faculty.

"I do not dispute the judgment that some of the positions [expressed in *Just Love*] are not in accord with current official Catholic teaching," she said. "In the end, I can only clarify that the book was not intended to be an expression of current official Catholic teaching, nor was it aimed specifically against this teaching. It is of a different genre altogether."

In an email to NCR Lisa Sowle Cahill, a well known Catholic theologian, author and professor of ethics at Jesuit-run Boston College, said, "Theologians do not see or present their work as 'official church teaching' and few of the

(Continued on page 6)

Gay ministry group refuses to sign oath

By Brian Roewe
National Catholic Reporter
June 25, 2012

Following a more than yearlong investigation into the group's "adherence to the fullness of Catholic teaching," the future of a national association of ministries to gay and lesbian Catholics is uncertain because its board members refused to sign an "oath of personal integrity" to Catholic teaching given to them by the local bishop.

Declining the oath could result in Bishop Salvatore Cordileone of Oakland, Calif., declaring the Catholic Association for Lesbian and Gay Ministry, or CALGM, as "not authentically Catholic," a letter to its members from the association president warns.

"In good faith, we have done most everything required of us to maintain a legitimate space within the boundaries of the institutional Church," president Sheila Nelson wrote to members April 5. "Yet, this has not seemed to be adequate or satisfactory to the office of the bishop. We have repeatedly, abundantly and humbly submitted that our work is pastoral in nature and not political or primarily doctrinal."

The Oakland bishop declined NCR's request for comment. Mike Brown, the diocese's director of communications, issued a statement saying, "If the Bishop decides to make a public statement about the CALGM organization, he will then decide the best time and communication method to do so."

Cordileone's list of concerns with the association have included the omission of specific church documents on its website and publications; its use of the terms gay and lesbian; members' statements deemed critical of the church; and the backgrounds, affiliations and public statements of both conference speakers and board members.

In an April 12 letter to the association's board, Cordileone stated he would

"take public action to clarify the status of CALGM with regard to authentic Catholic ministry" should they refuse to take an oath that requested that each member "strive to clearly present Catholic doctrine on homosexuality in its fullness" and "profess personally to hold and believe, and practice all that the holy Catholic church teaches, believes and proclaims to be true, whether from the natural moral law or by way of revelation from God through Scripture and tradition."

The board has twice rejected the bishop's request.

"That you would require such an unprecedented and extensive manifestation of our consciences suggests to us that, irrespective of our pastoral effectiveness, you wish to force an end to these, admittedly difficult, conversations. You will not be receiving any signed oaths from the Board members," Nelson wrote in a March 29 letter, the first informing the bishop of their decision.

Formed in 1994 as an independent 501(c)(3) charitable organization, CALGM is a nationwide network of gay outreach ministries. Its 200-plus members provide pastoral care for gay Catholics and their families in 25 states, and include nearly two dozen diocesan and parish ministries -- each independent and subject to its local pastor or diocese.

Casey Lopata, the cofounder of Fortunate Families and a longtime member of CALGM, said the network "keeps people connected ... rather than in isolation," but its importance extends beyond those in ministry.

"I think the importance is that the people in the pews understand that there is a Catholic-affiliated association that supports gay and lesbian people and their involvement within the church," he said.

Though not an official organization of the U.S. bishops' conference, CALGM and its members interact regularly with bishops nationwide, and several bishops have spoken or celebrated the Eucharist

at its national conventions. The association maintains an office and mailing address in Berkley, Calif., placing it under the watch of the Oakland bishop.

The investigation into the association and its "adherence to the fullness of Catholic teaching" began in late 2010 through a Dec. 22 letter from Cordileone. Since then, the two sides have met in person twice, and exchanged nearly a dozen letters.

CALGM defines itself as a pastoral outreach organization and views its mission as "setting the table" for gay Catho-

lics, particularly those who feel unwelcome in the church. While it strives to present church teaching clearly, its board stated in an April 15, 2011, letter to Cordileone, the association does not view catechesis as one of its duties.

"We never speak anything opposed to Catholic teaching. Regardless, our focus is pastoral ministry, not catechesis. We bring people to a place where they can seek catechesis from their own parish or faith community," Arthur Fitzmaurice, a CALGM board member and its re-

(Continued on page 9)



At World Pride in London

New Ways Ministry's Executive Director Francis DeBernardo (left) proudly carries the organization's banner with Martin Pendergast, a longtime supporter, in the World Pride March in London, England, on July 7, 2012. DeBernardo took part in a World Pride multi-faith international conference on faith and LGBT issues while in London. He also conducted New Ways Ministry's "Next Steps" program for people in the United Kingdom. ✦

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Catholics Among Christian Leaders Supporting LGBT Rights in Uganda

Bondings 2.0
 Wwww.NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
 July 25, 2012

The Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights has released an open letter by American Christian leaders expressing solidarity with LGBT Ugandans as that nation continues to consider anti-gay legislation. Among the 46 signatories are 28 who are connected with Catholic institutions (see below).

The announcement on the Kennedy Center's website states:

“Washington — July 24, 2012 Today, a group of 46 American Christian leaders issued an open letter expressing solidarity with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Ugandans in the face of “increased bigotry and hatred.” The letter, coordinated by Faith in Public Life, Human Rights First and the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, comes as a new Political Research Associates report released today accuses, among others, evangelicals such as Pat Robertson, Catholics and Mormons of setting up campaigns and fronts in Africa designed to press for anti-gay laws. . . .

“It’s important for Ugandans to know that not all Evangelical and Catholic leaders think LGBT people should be criminals,’ says Frank Mugisha, executive director of Sexual Minorities Uganda and the 2011 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award laureate, ‘This letter from prominent American Christians is a crucial step in our efforts to introduce Ugandans to more positive and loving Christian messages in contrast to the harmful rhetoric from our own pastors that only leads to more violence and hate.’”

In part, the text of the letter reads:

“Regardless of the diverse theological views of our religious traditions regarding the morality of homosexuality, the criminalization of homosexuality, along with the violence and discrimination against LGBT people that inevitably follows, is incompatible with the teachings of our faith.

“As American Christians we recognize that groups and leaders within our own country have been implicated in efforts to spread prejudice and discrimination in Uganda. We urge our Christian brothers and sisters in Uganda to resist the false arguments, debunked long ago, that LGBT

people pose an inherent threat to our children and our societies. LGBT people exist in every country and culture, and we must learn to live in peace together to ensure the freedom of all, especially when we may disagree.

“We condemn misguided actions that have led to increased bigotry and hatred of LGBT people in Uganda that debases the inherent dignity of all humans created in the image of our Maker. Such treatment degrades the human family, threatens the common good, and defies the teachings of our Lord – wherever it occurs.”

To read the full text of this letter and to see the full list of signatories, go to www.rfkcenter.org/american-christian-leaders-speak-out-against-anti-homosexuality-laws

The signatories associated with Catholic institutions are:

Ambassador Thomas P. Melady, Former U.S. Ambassador to Uganda and the Vatican; **Gerald J. Beyer, Ph.D.**, Saint Joseph's University; **Nicholas P. Cafardi**, Duquesne University; **M. Shawn Copeland**, Boston College. **Rev. Paul Crowley, S.J.**, Santa Clara University; **Nancy Dal-
laval, Ph.D.**, Fairfield University; **Francis Schüssler
Fiorenza**, Harvard Divinity School; **Jeannine Hill
Fletcher**, Fordham University; **Sister Mary Ann Hinsdale,
IHM, Ph.D.**, Boston College; **Bradford E. Hinze, Ph.D.**,
Fordham University. **Rev. James Hug, S.J.**, Center of
Concern; **John Inglis**, University of Dayton; **Reverend
Raymond B. Kemp**, Woodstock Theological Center; **Paul
Lakeland**, Fairfield University; **Rev. John Langan S.J.**;
Georgetown University; **Rev. Bryan N. Massingale,
S.T.D.**, Marquette University; **Joseph A. McCartin**,
Georgetown University, **Alex Mikulich**, Loyola Univer-
sity, New Orleans; **David J. O'Brien, Ph.D.**, University of
Dayton; **Christopher Pramuk**, Xavier University, Cincin-
nati; **Thomas J. Reese, S.J.**, Woodstock Theological Center;
Stephen F. Schneck, Ph.D., The Catholic University of
America, **Sister Nancy Sylvester, IHM**, Institute for
Communal Contemplation and Dialogue; **Terrence W.
Tilley**, Fordham University; **Edward Vacek, S.J.**, Boston
College; **Todd Whitmore**, University of Notre Dame; **To-
bias Winright, Ph.D.**, Saint Louis University; **Sandra
Yocum, Ph.D.**, University of Dayton.

Almost 42% of Uganda's population is Catholic, the largest denomination in this predominantly Christian nation. ✦

Gay-friendly Catholic church in SF draws heat for drag queen ban idea

By Carolyn Copland
The San Francisco Examiner
August 13, 2012

Although a gay-friendly Catholic church in The City's Castro neighborhood is receiving heat for allegedly banning drag queens from all future events on its premises, church officials are saying that while they opposed the idea at first, they quickly changed their minds.

Members of the Castro Country Club, an LGBT addiction recovery group, say the new pastor of Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Church told them they could not hold their third annual Harvest Feast fundraiser on the premises if drag queens were to participate.

And although church Business Manager Michael Poma acknowledged that Pastor Brian Costello did tell members of the Castro Country Club that they could not hold their event if drag queens were scheduled to attend, Poma said he quickly reversed his decision.

"Father Brian wasn't educated about the importance of drag queens in the gay community," Poma said. "Once it was explained to him, he said they were welcome to attend as long as their behavior was church-appropriate."

Church officials now say the new policy is not a prohibition against drag queens, but rather an end to all one-time events that do not originate at the church. Poma said the ban applies to all outside events — gay or straight — including weddings, parties or fundraisers. The church is still planning to hold its own events, including 12-step pro-


grams, suppers for the homeless and AIDS support groups.

"This is not a ban on drag queens or an insult to the gay community whatsoever," Poma said. "In the church hall there have been issues with weddings and other groups, so we decided to put an end to them altogether. We are part of the community here and to think that we're banning drag queens is obnoxious and ridiculous."

However, Castro Country Club members seem to be viewing the new policy as an intentional slight.



“In previous years, we have had Ivy Drip and Heklina, both well-known entertainers and community fundraisers, serve as emcees of the event, and we felt we could not in good conscience abide by the new policies,” the club’s board said in a statement to the Bay Area Reporter.



The ban on outside events was scheduled to go into effect at the end of September, but was pushed

forward after the church consulted with the San Francisco Archdiocese. Although the Bay Area Reporter suggested Salvatore Cordileone, who is set to be the next archbishop, made the decision, the archdiocese insists it was completely up to the parish.

"The new archbishop has absolutely no authority until Oct. 4 when he takes over," Archdiocese spokesman George Wesolek said. "I'm pretty sure he didn't even hear about this issue until now."

Wesolek said there have been several events on the premises that were not "church-appropriate." The San Francisco Gay Softball League allegedly held an event consisting of men stripping and simulating sex acts. ✦

LCWR will continue dialogue, but not compromise mission

By Joshua McElwee
National Catholic Reporter
August 10, 2012

ST. LOUIS -- The organization which represents the majority of U.S. Catholic sisters said Friday afternoon it would continue discussions with church officials regarding a Vatican-ordered takeover, but "will reconsider" if it "is forced to compromise the integrity of its mission."

The statement by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, which represents some 80 percent of U.S. sisters, came at the end of the group's annual assembly, held this week in St. Louis.

The sisters were responding to an April 18 mandate by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that ordered the group to revise and place itself under the authority of three U.S. bishops.

Reading aloud from a prepared statement, which came after approval from the 900 sisters gathered at the assembly, LCWR's president, Franciscan Sr. Pat Farrell, said LCWR membership wanted to use the occasion of the Vatican order "to explain to church leaders LCWR's mission, values and operating principles."

As part of the Vatican's mandate, LCWR has been ordered to place itself under the authority of an "archbishop delegate," Seattle's Archbishop Peter Sartain.

LCWR national board is expected to meet with Sartain in St. Louis Saturday, Aug. 11, for about two hours. The focus of that meeting "will be on beginning to process with him and see how that unfolds," Farrell said at a press conference.

The LCWR expect "open and honest dialogue" with Sartain that "may lead not only to increasing understanding between the church leadership and women religious, but also to creating more possibilities for the laity and, particularly for women, to have a voice in the church," the statement said.

"Religious life, as it is lived by the women religious who comprise LCWR, is an authentic expression of this life that must not be compromised," it said.

"The assembly instructed the LCWR officers to conduct their conversation with Archbishop Sartain from a stance of deep prayer that values mutual respect, careful listening and open dialogue," the statement said. "The officers will proceed with these discussions as long as possible, but will reconsider if LCWR is forced to compromise the integrity of its mission."

The statement was approved by a wide majority of the membership, two members of the group told *NCR*.

Over the past week, LCWR members have been meeting in closed-door "executive sessions" during the assembly to discuss the mandate. Members were asked to keep those discussions confidential. At the last executive session, held Friday afternoon, "99.9 percent" of the members present stood and clapped in approval when a final draft of the release was read aloud, said Sr. Nancy Corcoran, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet of St. Louis who represents her order as an LCWR member.

"People were thrilled," said Corcoran. "You could have heard the hooting and the cheering and the yelling. It makes me proud. It was worth all the time and effort."

In their statement, the LCWR members also reference the wide support the group has received from lay people, seen in vigils hosted in cities across the country this week.

LCWR members, the statement reads, recognize that many lay people had urged the group to help "reconcile

the differences that exist within the Catholic church" and create "spaces for honest and open conversation on the critical moral and ethical questions that face the global community."

LCWR's members also urged their officers "not to allow the work with CDF to absorb the time, energy and resources of the conference nor to let it distract the conference from the work its mission requires," reads the statement.

Speaking at the press conference



Sister Pat Farrell, OSF

Friday, Farrell said that while the process of approval of the statement didn't involve "voting as such," the statement "had a high level of approval by the members."

In order to get a sense of how each of the some 900 gathered felt regarding parts of the statement, one member told *NCR* following the press conference, the assembly used different colored cards to allow members to express support or disapproval.

When the final draft was read aloud at Friday's afternoon executive session, said Benedictine Sr. Anne Sheperd, the group gave a "lasting standing ovation" to the final draft.

Asked what she hopes to receive in dialogue with Sartain, Farrell said LCWR wants "to be recognized and be understood as equal in the church."

"And really we do want to come to the point of having an environment ... for the entire Catholic church to search for truth together, to talk about issues that are very complicated. And there is not the environment right now."

The Vatican's critique of LCWR said the Vatican congregation identified a "prevalence of certain radical feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith" in the group's programs and "corporate dissent" in the group regarding the church's sexual teachings.

Farrell said during questioning from the press that "dialogue on doctrine is not going to be our starting point."

"Our starting point will be about our own life and about our understanding of religious life," Farrell continued. "And the documents, in our view, misrepresent that."

Following the issuing of the LCWR's statement Friday, the group is to host a Mass at which the annual transition of the group's top leaders will occur. LCWR's leadership is composed of a president-elect, president and past president, who govern the group collaboratively with the group's secretary, treasurer and executive director.

At the ceremony, Farrell will move to the position of past president, while Franciscan Sr. Florence Deacon, currently LCWR's president-elect, will become its president.

Asked if that change in leadership would affect their dialogue with Sartain, Farrell said the process of having three sisters working together in leadership allows for "continuity."

"But there is change over and that really speaks to who we are and how we share leadership," Farrell continued. "It really speaks to who we are."

Deacon, who is also the congregational leader of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi based in St. Francis, Wis., previously served at the United Nations as director of the New York office of Franciscans International, a nongovernmental organization that lobbies for justice issues.

Before LCWR's announcement of its statement Friday, three past presidents of the organization were part of a press briefing in which they explained some of

the process that eventually led to the statement, and what would happen following its release.

Sr. Helen Garvey said at the briefing, the LCWR national board will meet to discuss the statement in more detail before meeting with Sartain for two hours on Saturday Aug. 11.

Asked at the briefing how LCWR was handling the logistics of coming to a single decision among the some 900 members attending the gathering, Garvey, who served as LCWR president in 1987, said that the process was "not much different from what we do in our congregations."

A typical flow to the executive sessions, said Garvey, saw LCWR's leadership explain some of the questions before

the group, allow individual tables to discuss the matters among themselves, have time for representatives, from those tables to talk to the entire group, and then allow facilitators to gather the thoughts together.

"Sometimes the Holy Spirit just speaks to us in a very un-programmed and unprocessed way," said Garvey, an organizational consultant for religious congregations who also serves on *NCR*'s board.

Sr. Marlene Weisenbeck, a member of the community of Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, said in the briefing that while the 900-member group did not take a vote on every issue, they did make sure to hear "from the entire group ... what is surfacing about the thinking of the sisters from the group."

"It's easy to see whether or not we are coming to consensus," said Weisenbeck, who served as LCWR president in 2010. "It is very clear."

Asked at the Friday morning press conference about whether LCWR members felt empowered to make decisions regarding the mandate on behalf of their entire communities, Weisenbeck said that generally LCWR members feel a spirit from their congregational members that they can "do what they need to do."

As an example, Weisenbeck said that before leaving to represent her congregation at an LCWR assembly years ago her congregational members presented her with a bouquet of roses.

"I understand their trust and their empowerment," she said. ✚

New Ways Ministry Statement on Vatican Assessment of LCWR

Francis DeBernardo
Executive Director
New Ways Ministry
Mount Rainier, Maryland
April 18, 2012

For all of our 35-year history, New Ways Ministry has been strongly supported by Catholic women religious in the United States. This support, manifested by so many generous and courageous acts, has, indeed, been the backbone of our bridge-building ministry for lesbian/gay Catholics and the wider church community.

So, it was with great dismay that we learned that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) today released a document on the recent "Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious," (LCWR) in which the Congregation announced the appointment of an Archbishop Delegate to oversee LCWR's activities. We are even more deeply saddened that support of New Ways Ministry by women's religious communities and by LCWR leaders was singled out as one of the reasons that a doctrinal assessment was undertaken. From the document:

"Policies of Corporate Dissent. The Cardinal [William Levada, CDF Prefect] spoke of this issue in reference to letters the CDF received from "Leadership Teams" of various Congregations, among them LCWR officers, protesting the Holy See's actions regarding the question of women's ordination and of a correct pastoral approach to ministry to homosexual persons, e.g. letters about New Ways Ministry's conferences. The terms of the letters suggest that these sisters collectively take a position not in agreement with the Church's teaching on human sexuality. It is a serious matter when these Leadership Teams are

not providing effective leadership and example to their communities, but place themselves outside the Church's teaching."

In 2007, many leadership teams of women's religious communities wrote to the CDF to express their concern about the CDF's directive to the Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, to deny permission to our organization to celebrate the Eucharist at our national conference in that archdiocese. As far as we are aware, the content of these letters questioned the Vatican's denial of the Eucharist without addressing the other issues of pastoral care of lesbian and gay people or Catholic teaching on human sexuality.

The CDF's criticism of receiving letters seems intended to silence discussion of important issues in the church. Why are Vatican leaders afraid to hear what women religious think on a topic such as homosexuality that is being so widely discussed in all other quarters of society? The Catholic faith is a living faith that requires dialogue and discussion, not only to thrive, but also to be a viable witness of God's love in the world.

If the leadership of the Catholic Church is unwilling to listen to the idea of the leaders of some of its most dedicated members, then our Church will never be able to grow or to respond in a Gospel way to the needs of our world. The CDF's repressive action towards LCWR further erodes Catholicism's ability to be a vital force in the world.

New Ways Ministry, in gratitude for all we have received from women's religious communities, pledges our prayerful support to LCWR and all its members during this period of trial. We know that our God, who has graced these women with gifts of justice, fortitude, and wisdom, will guide and sustain them at this critical time. ✚

Several priests shut church door to petitions to block gay marriage

By Lornet Turnbull
The Seattle Times
April 13, 2012

Priests at a number of Roman Catholic parishes in the area have said no to the gathering of signatures for Referendum 74 at their churches — putting them at odds with their archbishop on a statewide ballot measure seeking repeal of Washington's same-sex marriage law.

The majority of parishes in Western Washington are expected to make the petitions available — some as soon as this Sunday, following Mass, according to a spokesman for the Archdiocese of Seattle.

But pastors of at least three prominent Catholic churches in Seattle — St. Mary's Church, St. Joseph Parish and St. James Cathedral — have notified members that the petitions will not be made available there.

In an item posted on St. James' web-

site, the Very Rev. Michael G. Ryan said he decided not to permit the petitions after a discussion with the pastoral team. He said he believed allowing the petitions would "prove hurtful and seriously divisive in our community. In saying this, I do realize that there are some who will be disappointed with this decision."

The decisions by pastors come two weeks after the Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain, archbishop of Seattle, sent a lengthy letter to parishioners outlining his support for Ref. 74 and explaining why he believes defending traditional marriage is important.

"We believe that the redefinition of marriage is such a far-reaching and radical decision that it should not be left simply to a vote of legislators and the signature of the governor," his letter said.

Sartain's position is in line with the teachings of the Catholic Church, which has traditionally opposed same-sex mar-

riage, despite support from 56 percent of lay Catholics for such unions. In states from Maine to California, the church has advocated — to some degree or another — against such unions.

Yet in supporting the gathering of signatures in local parishes, Sartain went further than other bishops, some of whom more recently have backed off their opposition to same-sex marriage, or even come out in support of arrangements such as civil unions. Still, his recommendation was not a dictum, and he left it to the discretion of pastors to decide for themselves and their parishioners how best to handle the matter.

June 6 deadline

Churches risk losing their tax-exempt status if they become involved in political campaigning, but the restriction doesn't apply to initiative and referendum campaigns, which are considered legislation. Churches are permitted to lobby on pending laws.

The Ref. 74 campaign of those who oppose same-sex marriage, which includes the National Organization for Marriage, hopes voters will reject the state's new same-sex marriage law. To get the measure on the November ballot, the campaign must gather at least 120,577 valid signatures by June 6.

At Assumption Catholic Church in North Seattle, the Rev. Oliver Duggan called the issue the "elephant still in the room." He said he planned to talk about it on Sunday but declined to reveal what he intends to say.

At St. Monica Catholic Church on Mercer Island, members of the Knights of Columbus will have petitions available following Sunday Mass, an administrator there said.

Calls to the archdiocese have been running about even between those opposed to the archbishop's stance on the issue and those who favor it, archdiocese spokesman Greg Magnoni said.

"Our bishops determined that marriage is such a significant issue for the common good, that it was imperative the measure be placed on the ballot so voters can decide," Magnoni said.

Before legislators in February passed the state's same-sex marriage legislation, Sartain testified against it in Olympia. But some church members are hard-pressed to recall an instance where — on the issue of gay rights, at least — the church has gone so far as to allow signature gathering inside parishes anywhere.

Francis DeBernardo, executive director of New Ways Ministry, which advocates for gays within the Catholic Church, called Sartain's position "a very aggressive step — and in the wrong direction."

Marriage alternatives

In other states, "there appears to be a trend of the church supporting civil unions or domestic partnerships, arrangements short of full marriage," he said.

For example, he noted, the Archbishop of Westminster in England in December came out in support of civil unions. And in New Hampshire this year, the Catholic Church endorsed civil unions for same-sex couples as a compromise to a full repeal of that state's same-sex marriage law, which has been in place since 2009.

In 2009, the Diocese in Portland, Maine, opposed marriage equality on a referendum and made petitions available in its parishes.

This year, same-sex marriage supporters in Maine are trying again to legalize gay marriage. Last month, church leaders there announced they would not actively campaign against the measure, but would instead educate members on the issues.

"Education is the proper role for the church; collecting signatures is not education," DeBernardo said.

In Maine, he said, some parishes have reported a loss in membership as a result of the church's position in 2009.

"That's important for Archbishop Sartain and others to consider," DeBernardo said. "This could have a devastating affect, regardless of the outcome."

Magnoni, the Seattle Archdiocese spokesman, said that at least here in Washington state, there have not been opportunities for the church to stake a claim on a moral issue this important to its teachings. The archdiocese, for example, was not involved in the Ref. 71 campaign, which attempted to repeal the state's domestic-partnership law in 2009.

"The church, in the first instance, is not a political institution," Magnoni said. "But when there's a political issue with a moral dimension, the church has the responsibility to step up and help people understand Catholic teaching around the issues." ➔

Gay-friendly Catholic Colleges and Universities

Below is a list of known gay-friendly Catholic colleges and universities, that is, those Catholic institutions that have some type of gay/lesbian student group, support group, ally group, etc. If you are aware of such a college that is known as welcoming to gay/lesbian people, please let us know.



- Alabama**
Mobile: Spring Hill College
- California**
Belmont: Notre Dame de Namur University
Goleta: St. Mark's University
Los Angeles: Loyola Marymount University, Mount Saint Mary's College
Moraga: St. Mary's College
Ranchos Palos Verde: Marymount College
San Diego: University of San Diego
San Francisco: University of San Francisco
Santa Clara: Santa Clara University
- Colorado**
Denver: Regis University
- Connecticut**
Fairfield: Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University
New Haven: Albertus Magnus College
West Hartford: Saint Joseph College
- District of Columbia**
Georgetown University, Trinity University
- Florida**
Miami Gardens: St. Thomas University
Miami Shores: Barry University
- Hawaii**
Honolulu: Chaminade University
- Illinois**
Chicago: DePaul University, Loyola University, St. Xavier University
Joliet: University of St. Francis
River Forest: Dominican University in Illinois
Romeoville: Lewis University
- Indiana**
Notre Dame: Holy Cross College, St. Mary's College, University of Notre Dame
- Iowa**
Davenport: St. Ambrose University
Dubuque: Loras College
- Kentucky**
Louisville: Spalding University, Bellarmine University
- Louisiana**
New Orleans: Loyola University
- Maryland**
Baltimore: College of Notre Dame of Maryland, Loyola College of Maryland

- Massachusetts**
Boston: Emmanuel College, Boston College
Chestnut Hill: Boston College
Chicopee: Elms College
Easton: Stonehill College
North Andover: Merrimack College
Weston: Regis College
Worcester: Assumption College, College of the Holy Cross
- Michigan**
Detroit: University of Detroit Mercy
Grand Rapids: Aquinas College
- Minnesota**
Collegeville: St. John's University
Duluth: College of St. Scholastica
Minneapolis: College of St. Catherine
St. Joseph: College of Saint Benedict
St. Paul: St. Thomas University
Winona: St. Mary's University of Minnesota
- Missouri**
Kansas City: Avila University, Rockhurst University
St. Louis: Fontbonne University, St. Louis University
- Montana**
Helena: Carroll College
- Nebraska**
Omaha: Creighton University
- New Hampshire**
Manchester: St. Anselm College
Nashua: Rivier College
- New Jersey**
Caldwell: Caldwell College
Jersey City: St. Peter's College
South Orange: Seton Hall
- New York**
Albany: College of Saint Rose
Brooklyn and Patchogue: St. Joseph College
Bronx: Fordham University, Manhattan College
Buffalo: Canisius College
Loudonville: Sienna College
New Rochelle: College of New Rochelle, Iona College
Poughkeepsie: Marist College
Riverdale: College of Mount St. Vincent
Rochester: St. John Fisher College
St. Bonaventure: St. Bonaventure University
Sparkill: St. Thomas Aquinas College

- Syracuse:* LeMoyne College
Queens: St. John's University
- Ohio**
Cincinnati: Xavier University
Cleveland Heights: John Carroll University
Dayton: University of Dayton
Pepper Pike: Ursuline College
South Euclid: Notre Dame College
Sylvania: Lourdes College
- Oregon**
Marylhurst: Marylhurst University
Portland: University of Portland
- Pennsylvania**
Cresson: Mount Aloysius College
Dallas: Misericordia University
Erie: Mercyhurst College
Greensburg: Seton Hill University
Philadelphia: Chestnut Hill College, LaSalle University, St. Joseph's University
Pittsburgh: Carlow University, Duquesne University
Radnor: Cabrini College
Reading: Alvernia University
Scranton: Marywood University
Villanova: Villanova University
- Rhode Island**
Newport: Salve Regina University
Providence: Providence College
- Texas**
Austin: Saint Edward's University
San Antonio: University of the Incarnate Word, Our Lady of the Lake University
- Vermont**
Colchester: Saint Michael's College
- Washington**
Lacey: St. Martin's College
Seattle: Seattle University
Spokane: Gonzaga University
- West Virginia**
Wheeling: Wheeling Jesuit University
- Wisconsin**
De Pere: St. Norbert College
Madison: Edgewood College
Milwaukee: Alverno College, Cardinal Stritch University, Marquette University
- Canada**
Toronto: Regis College

Washington State Catholics talk marriage equality

By James Whitely
Seattle Gay News
August 24, 2012

On Wednesday, August 22, about 60 local Catholics gathered at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral to hear from two longtime Catholic friends of the LGBT community, who are unequivocal supporters of marriage equality. Sister Jeannine Gramick and Francis DeBernardo of New Ways Ministry spoke on why Catholics should (and mostly do) support marriage equality and offered some historical perspective on the issue.

'We are committed to give a progressive Catholic witness on issues like marriage equality and others where we believe our hierarchy is out of touch,' said Betty, a local Catholic, introducing the two nationally renowned speakers.

The Numbers

'Catholics are more supportive of marriage equality than any other denomination in the country,' said DeBernardo, 'while public opinion seems to reflect the opposite.'

Citing polls from the Public Religion Research Institute, DeBernardo said only 22% of Catholics oppose same-sex marriage and 71% are in favor of same-sex civil marriage. According to DeBernardo, the reason these numbers are surprising to many people is because the leadership of the Catholic Church is so outspokenly against marriage equality.

DeBernardo reported that about one-fourth of the Catholics he's spoken with say they regularly hear some sort of message about Gays and Lesbians in church, and two-thirds of that group say those messages are negative.

'That's what's causing that perception problem,' said DeBernardo. 'The people with the microphones are giving those negative messages, not the people in the pews.'

Catholics with Facts

Gramick, a co-founder of New Ways Ministry and member of the Sisters of Loretto, an order of nuns deeply concerned with social justice, gave an overview of the history of Christian-era mar-

riage in relation to the church and society, in an effort to dispel myths and empower the audience to do the same in conversations with other Catholics.



Francis DeBernardo, Senator Ed Murray, Sister Jeannine Gramick pose at Seattle meeting.

She detailed how marriage evolved from a private affair between families, with no civil or religious significance.

'They [marriages] gradually became civil ceremonies, as civil arrangements were made to define the right and responsibilities that people had in marriage, like to manage property and inheritance,' said Gramick. 'But it grew from a private family affair.'

'In fact,' Gramick continued, 'Some early Christian writers said that the church should not be involved in the institution of marriage at all. 'Leave it to the state [they said], because it inevitably involves sexual intercourse, and that's a little dirty.'

But after the Roman Empire fell, according to Gramick, the church assumed more of a civil role. Naturally, marriage, which had grown into a state

affair, then came under the purview of the church as well.

'It moved from the family, to the state, to the church,' said Gramick. 'This

gradual assumption took a thousand years.'

Gramick then made an effort to dispel some other myths that opponents of same-sex marriage typically spread, such as the idea that churches will be forced to perform same-sex marriages and that if they don't, they could be sued or lose their tax-exempt status.

'The bishops are saying a lot of things that are not true,' said Gramick.

A Matter of Principle

'So why do Catholics support marriage equality?' DeBernardo asked rhetorically. She said there are seven reasons, and what they all boil down to is that Catholics' support is 'not in spite of being Catholic, but because of being Catholic.'

The seven reasons she cited are:
1) What matters is love, not gender. Love

is what makes a family. The quality of a relationship is what Catholics should call moral or immoral.

2) Not supporting same-sex marriage is discriminatory, and the Catholic faith tells its adherents not to discriminate.

3) Catholics want to protect children. All children, regardless of what kind of family they live in, should have the same support and benefits.

4) Likewise, same-sex couples deserve equal protection, with the same societal and social rights of straight couples.

5) Marriage equality helps develop strong families and thus makes society stronger. The Catholic faith tells adherents that they should work for the common good of all people and the progressive development of society.

6) The church should not dictate public policy for all people.

7) Even if a Catholic disagrees with homosexuality, Catholics believe in equality and fairness for all.

Senator Murray Thanked

DeBernardo, who is New Ways Ministry's executive director, said he wanted to acknowledge a very special local Catholic in the audience that night - State Sen. Ed Murray, who, along with the state's Catholic governor, Christine Gregoire, have made same-sex marriage a potential reality here in Washington.

DeBernardo said Murray was 'instrumental' in the fight to achieve marriage equality in the state, and that 'he is really the hero of this campaign.'

Murray received a standing ovation from everyone in the room.

'Were going to have to show them that enthusiasm in November and all the way through to November,' added DeBernardo after the applause died down.

'No human being has the whole truth. But we, as the faithful have a responsibility to shape our church,' said Gramick. 'In this particular issue the church depends on LGBT people and their allies. We need to speak out.' ✦

Catholic Vice President Biden on Gay Marriage: 'Who Do You Love?'

By Michael Larotonda
ABCNews.go.com
May 6, 2012

Vice President Joe Biden expressed a candid openness to gay marriage today, but stopped short of saying whether President Obama would seek to legalize it as an institution in a second term.

"I am absolutely comfortable with the fact that men marrying men, women marrying women and heterosexual men marrying women are entitled to the same exact rights," he said. "All the civil rights, all the civil liberties. And quite frankly I don't see much of a distinction beyond that."

Biden made the remarks during an interview that aired on NBC's "Meet the Press" this morning. The vice president told host David Gregory his personal views were a matter of heart.

"Who do you love? Who do you love and will you be loyal to the person you love?" Biden said, "And that's what people are finding out what all marriages at their root are about."

The comments could signal a further shift for the Obama administration as the president's reelection campaign enters full swing. Since the 2008 election, Obama has officially supported only civil unions, leading to some friction with liberal supporters. But in October 2010 the president suggested to a group of progressive bloggers his views could change.

"Attitudes evolve, including mine, and I think that it is an issue that I wres-

tle with and think about because I have a whole host of friends who are in gay partnerships," he said.

The administration has held to that stance since and Gregory asked whether Biden's views had also evolved.

The White House has traditionally held warm relations with the LGBT community and has hosted multiple conferences on the subject. Obama himself appears in a video from the "It Gets Better Project," a series of videos supporting gay victims of bullying. But after the repeal of the military's "Don't Ask Don't Tell," policy and the Justice Department's chilling of the Defense of Marriage Act, speculation has run over how the administration could go forward heading into November.

The vice president told Gregory that he measured the subject on how social culture changed to deal with it. He cited open portrayals of gay and lesbian characters on television as evidence of wider acceptance of the topic.



Vice President Joe Biden

"I think 'Will and Grace' probably did more to educate the American public than almost anything anybody's ever

done so far," he said. "People fear that which is different and now they're beginning to understand." Biden wouldn't say whether the administration would seek legislation recognizing gay marriage in a second term stating, "the president sets the policy." But the Obama campaign has already jumped in, with top strategist David Axelrod downplaying the event roughly an hour after it aired. He

tweets:
"@DAVIDAXELROD @chucktodd @meetthepress What VP said-that all married couples should have exactly the same legal rights-is precisely POTUS's position."

The White House echoes Axelrod. In a statement released to Politico, a spokesperson from the Vice President's office maintains Biden's comments do not fall outside the administration's current stance.

"The Vice President was saying what the President has said previously - that committed and loving same-sex couples deserve the same rights and protections enjoyed by all Americans, and that we oppose any effort to rollback those rights [...] Beyond that, the Vice President was expressing that he too is evolving on the issue, after meeting so many committed couples and families in this country."

LGBT groups are expressing general support for Biden's comments, although some express wariness the White House and Obama campaign's statements are an attempt to walk-back the Vice President's candor. A written statement from the Human Rights Campaign reads:

"We are encouraged by Vice President Biden's comments, who rightly articulated that loving and committed gay and lesbian couples should be treated equally. Now is the time for President Obama to speak out for full marriage equality for same-sex couples."

HRC spokesman Fred Sainz would later write ABC News, "There's no question the VP was voicing his support for marriage equality, not some form of ambiguous relationship recognition."

However, at least one high ranking official within gay rights organizations said that this walk back isn't likely to do much damage to Obama's relationship with the gay community. The president, said this source, "has a lot of good will among the gay donor community."

Currently, gay couples can wed in six states and the District of Columbia. ✦

Reminding those in despair of God’s love

By Father Peter J. Daly
Catholic San Francisco
May 11, 2012

The young man began to cry. I asked him why he was so unhappy. He said it was because his family would not accept him. I asked why they would not accept him. He answered, “Because I am gay. They are very Catholic.” I started to cry, too. Three times in 25 years of ministry I have sat across the room from young men who have attempted suicide because they were gay or feared they were gay. Several other times, especially when I was in campus ministry at The Catholic University of America, I talked with young people despondent over their gay-sexual identity. I have talked with people who cut or disfigured themselves because they had such a deep self-loathing because they were gay. According to a study done by the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which was released last year, gay and lesbian youth are much more likely than their heterosexual peers to have thought about suicide or to have attempted suicide. Why do they commit suicide? Some are bullied at school. Some feel rejected by their peers, their parents and their families. Sometimes they feel rejected by their religion and their pastors. Some feel they are unacceptable to the God who made them. That is a great wrong and a great tragedy. What can people in pastoral ministry say to them? First, I think we should say we love them. And so does God. Second, we can offer them prayer.

No one should feel excluded from God’s love. No one should ever be driven to despair.

Twenty years ago, I was asked to represent Catholic University at the reading of names of people who had died of AIDS at the presentation of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt in Washington, D.C. Each of us was given 20 or so names to read. We were told by the organizers not to add anything or to give any speeches. When I got to the microphone, I read my list of names just as I was told. But at the end of the list, something moved me to want to pray for them. It did not seem adequate to merely say their name. So I quickly said our traditional prayer for the dead. “Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls, and all the souls of the faithful departed, rest in peace.”

As I came down from the podium on the National Mall, an elderly couple approached me. They were crying. They said I had read their son’s name. They told me their pastor had refused their son a burial when he had died of AIDS because he was publicly gay. They said that I was the first priest who ever prayed for their son in public and were grateful. I embraced them. How could any pastor of souls refuse consolation to the dying and a prayer for the dead? They are part of the spiritual works of mercy. That is our reason for being. If we are not in the business of showing love to God’s children, we don’t have a reason to be in business. I thought of that elderly couple as I sat across the room from the young man who had tears flowing down in his face. No one should feel excluded from God’s love. No one should ever be driven to despair. Ever. ✦

Vatican criticizes US theologian's book on sexual ethics

(Continued from page 1)
faithful are confused about this fact."

Sr. Patricia McDermott, president of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, expressed "profound regret that this Notification was issued." She said Farley "assiduously attempts to present the Catholic tradition as formative of her own rich experience while recognizing the ecumenical audience she often engages."

What the Notification says
The doctrinal congregation said that after an initial examination of the book, in March 2010 it sent Farley and her religious superior a "preliminary evaluation...indicating the doctrinal problems present in the text."

Farley's response that October "did not clarify those problems in a satisfactory manner," the congregation said, so it undertook a full examination of the book under its Regulations for Doctrinal Examinations.

Following a second exchange in 2011 between the congregation and Farley and her superior, the congregation concluded that her responses to the "grave problems" in the book were still inadequate and decided to proceed with the Notification, which is a standard form in which the congregation notifies church leaders and members that it has found serious doctrinal problems with a theologian's work.

On Farley's general approach, it said that in addressing moral issues she "either ignores the constant teaching of the magisterium [official church teaching authority] or, where it is occasionally mentioned, treats it as one opinion among others. Such an attitude is in no way justified, even within the ecumenical perspective that she wishes to promote."

It also accused her of a "defective understanding of the objective nature of the natural moral law," long a linchpin of official Catholic moral teaching. "This approach is not consistent with authentic Catholic theology," the congregation said.

On the five specific issues on which it criticized her positions here is a shortened version of what the congregation quoted from her book and its responses:

Masturbation: "Sr. Farley writes: 'Masturbation ... usually does not raise any moral questions at all. ...[T]he norms of justice as I have presented them would seem to apply to the choice of sexual self-pleasuring only insofar as this activity may help or harm, only insofar as it supports or limits,, well-being and liberty of spirit. This remains largely an empirical question, not a moral one.'" The firm and constant teaching of

the church "and the moral sense of the faithful have been in no doubt and have firmly maintained that masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely disordered action," even if one must also take into account factors such as "affective immaturity, force of acquired habit" that may "lessen or even extenuate moral culpability," the congregation responded.

Homosexual acts: "Sr. Farley writes: 'My own view ... is that same-sex relationships and activities can be justified according to the same sexual ethic as heterosexual relationships. Therefore, same-sex oriented persons as well as their activities can and should be respected whether or not they have a choice to be otherwise.'"

"This opinion is not acceptable," the congregation said. While persons with homosexual tendencies "must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity," it added, church tradition, based on Scripture, "has always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to natural law."

Homosexual unions: Noting that Sr. Farley argues that antidiscrimination laws play an important role in reversing hatred and stigmatization of gays and lesbians,, the congregation quoted from the book, "Presently one of the most urgent issues before the U.S. public is marriage for same-sex partners – that is, granting of social recognition and legal standing to unions between lesbians and gays comparable to unions between heterosexuals."

"This position is opposed to the teaching of the magisterium," the congregation said, quoting from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and from previous statements it has made on the subject, including, "The principles of respect and nondiscrimination cannot be invoked to support legal recognition of homosexual persons" – in part because that would mean "approval of deviant behavior, with the consequence of making it a model in present-day society."

Indissolubility of marriage: "Sister Farley writes: 'My own position is that a marriage commitment is subject to release on the same ultimate grounds than any extremely serious, nearly unconditional, permanent commitment may cease to bind. ... Can it hold absolutely, in the face of radical and unexpected change? My answer: sometimes it cannot. Sometimes the obligation must be

released, and the commitment can be justifiably changed.'"

"This opinion is in contradiction to Catholic teaching on the indissolubility of marriage," the congregation said. Its response, citing church law and the Second Vatican Council among its sources, said in part that "Love seeks to be definitive; it cannot be an arrangement 'until further notice.' ... The Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the Creator who willed that marriage be indissoluble. ... Between the baptized, a



ratified and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death."

Divorce and remarriage: "Sr. Farley writes '...[T]he lives of two persons once married to one another are forever qualified by the experience of that marriage. ... But [if that ends in divorce] does what remains disallow a second marriage? My view is that it does not ... any more than the ongoing union between spouses after one of them has died prohibits a second marriage on the part of the one who still lives.'"

Quoting Christ in Mark's Gospel -- "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" – the congregation answered that in church teaching in the case of civil divorce and remarriage, "a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage

was," and those in such a situation cannot receive Communion unless they repent, confess in the sacrament of penance and commit themselves "to living in complete continence."

The congregation said that because of its positions "in direct contradiction with Catholic teaching in the field of sexual morality," *Just Love* "cannot be used as a valid expression of Catholic teaching, either in counseling and formation, or in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue."

It closed with a call to theologians to study and teach moral theology "in full concord with the principles of Catholic doctrine."

Other reactions
Harold Attridge, dean of Yale Divinity School and a Catholic, said, "Honest and creative theologians have often met a critical response to serious theological reflection, and it is no surprise that Professor Farley's work has done so as well."

He added, "In time, I suspect, those who react negatively to it now will come to appreciate the important contribution it makes to what must be our constant effort to examine the foundations of our moral life."

Farley is a former president of the Catholic Theological Society of America and of the Christian Ethics Society. She has received 11 honorary degrees and in 1992 was awarded the CTSA's highest honor for theological achievement, the John Courtney Murray Award.

Boston College theologian Cahill said in her email to *NCR* that the Notification adopted a strategy of only reporting Farley's conclusions on five specific moral issues and countering them with the conclusions of church teaching – without "engaging any of the substantive arguments for or against" the church teachings.

She said this approach creates the "unfortunate impression" that:

"Engaging Sr. Margaret's arguments and replies to previous inquiries [over the two-year investigation] is superfluous and unnecessary because the condemnation of her book was predetermined and the investigation a mere formality."

"There are in fact no reasonable arguments to back the positions asserted by the Notification."

"The CDF itself has abandoned the grounding of moral theology in the 'objective nature of the natural moral law' and is relying solely on the authority of past conclusions." ✦

Teacher fired for same-sex marriage views prays for dialogue

By Dan Gunderson

Minnesota.publicradio.org
June 27, 2012

MOORHEAD, Minn. — Trish Cameron comes from a strong Catholic tradition. She attended Catholic schools in Moorhead for 12 years. She regularly attends Mass.

But after losing her job at a Catholic elementary school for challenging the church's position on same sex-marriage, Cameron, 46, now prays for healthy dialogue on a "closed and painful" topic.

After 11 years teaching fifth graders at St. Joseph's Catholic school in Moorhead, the same-sex marriage issue was on Cameron's mind as she filled out her annual self-evaluation form this spring.

Part of the evaluation asked teachers to rate how well they support the teachings of the church. In the comment box, Cameron wrote, "I do not agree with all church teachings on a personal level, but I do not bring my own opinions into religion classes."

That comment led to a meeting with her principal and superintendent where she explained her break with the church on the issue of same-sex marriage. One week later, they asked her to resign.

"I don't think there was any hiding my feelings, but along the way at the

moments of dialogue was I thinking, 'gee I'm jeopardizing my employment?' No," she said. "That never crossed my mind."

Cameron said her decision to speak out goes back to a day last fall, when Bishop Michael Hoeppner of the Diocese of Crookston made his annual visit to her class.

"When he came to talk to my fifth graders this year this was the topic, gay marriage and the Minnesota Marriage Amendment," she recalled. "And it ended with a direct call to 'talk to your parents,' kind of 'tell them how to vote and make sure — this is important for the church.' And I was really troubled by that, I was very uncomfortable with that."

Cameron said she felt a fifth grade classroom was not the appropriate place for a political discussion of the marriage amendment, which would change Minnesota's Constitution to allow marriage only between a man and a woman. Cameron said she can't remember another instance in 11 years where a bishop expressed political views in the classroom.

Bishop Hoeppner's office did not respond to an interview request.



Trish Cameron

Cameron said church officials told her the definition of marriage is an issue with no room for discussion.

She believes her firing was not justified but is not planning any legal action against the church.

Cameron said she understands the church requires teachers to adhere to Catholic tenets and beliefs and that church officials may terminate employment at any time. But she said she never discussed her opinion of same sex marriage with her students.

St. Joseph's School Superintendent Monsignor Mike Foltz declined an interview request. In an email, he wrote, "It is of divine revelation and what more can I say?"

Cameron said the school wanted her to simply resign her position, but she did not want to leave parents and students wondering what happened. After a lot of intense discussion, Cameron said, the church allowed her to send a letter to parents. She explained she was asked to leave the school because of her position on same-sex marriage.

The school also sent a letter to parents announcing that Cameron would not return to her fifth grade class. In the letter, school officials don't refer to the same-sex marriage issue directly, but said, "As a school we hold ourselves to a standard to embrace and hold dear the church's teachings, particularly Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition."

By mailing the letters, school officials made Cameron's challenge of church teachings become public, just as the school year ended.

Cameron said she hoped to use the teacher-evaluation process to express her concern about the church bringing politics into her classroom. She also wanted to start a discussion about same-sex marriage that she hoped would spill over into local congregations.

Cameron recalls a proposal she made during discussions with school officials about how to handle her dismissal from the school.

"Wouldn't it be something if we could walk out of these doors together me in the middle, principal on one side, priest on the other and [say] 'we really

wanted Mrs. Cameron to teach here next year, but she believes gay marriage is OK, so she can't.' And I could say I really want to teach here next year, but I believe gay marriage is OK, so I can't. And from there we both stand with the fall-out."

Immediately after church officials asked her to resign, Cameron declined interview requests, saying she didn't want to contribute to an angry, polarizing discussion.

But she said when church officials remained silent, she decided to speak publicly. Cameron believes she represents a segment of the Catholic Church no longer willing to simply accept what the church leaders say without discussion. Cameron said she has heard from many Catholics who tell her they are also struggling with the same-sex marriage issue.

"We want to talk. This matters in our life. To some of us it's extraordinarily painful. To some of us it's really confusing," she said. "I have teenagers with close friends that are openly gay and those friends matter to them."

Cameron also said that she and other parents are afraid that the battle over same-sex marriage will alienate their children from the church.

"After generations of being planted and rooted in the Catholic faith, we're afraid we can't hand this faith comfortably to them," she said.

Cameron said she is not asking the church to sanctify same sex-marriage. But she does want church officials to talk about the issue. She worries they have slammed the door on dialogue.

"If that is what the church chooses to say in the end — divine revelation and no more dialogue, then I guess for me even my own future as a Catholic which matters a lot to me, that part of it I don't know yet," she said. "It really does matter how the church responds to this."

Cameron said her faith is strong and she won't turn away from the Catholic Church in the near future. But she said if the church continues to ignore the plea to talk about difficult questions like same-sex marriage, she will have no choice but to find a more open and accepting place to worship.

This fall, Cameron will start a new job teaching in a Fargo Public School. ✦

Maine diocese makes right move by choosing not to promote bias

By David Flynn

Portland Press-Herald
Portland, Maine
June 16, 2012

LYMAN - This Sunday is Father's Day. Across the country, families will gather for Sunday dinners and backyard barbecues. We raise a glass together, because it's not only a day families celebrate their fathers -- it's a day that we fathers celebrate our families, too. For all Americans, Father's Day is about love, respect and commitment.

I was raised Catholic, educated at a Catholic university and raised my sons in the church. Our family was very involved in our parish. I have served as Parish Council president, and my wife and I were both Eucharistic ministers and Sunday school teachers.

All three of my sons served as altar boys. I was proud to raise my kids in a faith with a deep commitment to care for the most vulnerable in our society.

My wife and I raised all three boys the same. They went to the same schools, played sports, hunted and fished, and occasionally got into trouble. They are now grown men, and I am extremely proud of all of them.

One of my sons is gay. I've always known that his life would be more difficult than that of his brothers. As a father, all I want is for all my boys to live happy, healthy, fulfilled lives.

On Father's Day, many Maine churches will be participating in a special "second collection." This second collection won't be used to fund a mission trip to Africa or to help feed Portland's homeless. Rather, these churches will use this money to fight civil same-sex marriage rights for my son.

While this is an unfortunate, anti-family move on the part of certain religious denominations, I am proud to say Maine's Catholic leadership has opted to avoid the divisiveness of this issue.

The fact that these other churches would participate in such activity is disappointing. More than wanting my son to be able to marry the person he loves, I want my son, and every father's son in Maine, to be proud of their faith traditions.

My father raised me in the Catholic faith that taught lessons about justice and the common good. He taught me that as a Catholic, I can be part of a powerful, positive force in the world. He taught me that God's greatest gift is love. And I passed these values on to my children.

By avoiding the divisive politics of this election year, Maine's Catholic Church has seemingly learned from past mistakes. In 2009, more than 140 churches across Maine took a second collection to oppose marriage equality for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

When this happened, many people stood up and walked out of church. Sadly, many have never come back. In fact, according to a study by the Pew Research Center, one in three Catholics born into the faith have stopped calling themselves Catholic.

They leave because Catholics want their faith known for its ability to inspire a culture, not for the political activities of its leaders.

I believe that engaging in the politics of fighting secular laws regarding civil same-sex marriage is wrong for any church. And a review of public opinion polls illustrates that the strong majority of Catholics agree with me.

According to a public opinion survey conducted in March by the Public Religion Research Institute, nearly 60 percent of adult American Catholics support civil marriage for same-sex couples. This is a higher rate of support than among the general public or members of other Christian denominations.

It would seem the Catholic Church in Maine is listening to the voices of the faithful in choosing not to promote discrimination. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Maine has signaled that it will not actively campaign against this November's ballot question allowing civil marriage for same-sex couples. The diocese's decision to "take a pass" on the second collection is a good indication that it will keep that promise.

Because Father's Day is about love, respect and commitment, I'm one Maine father who's proud of my son and my church. ✦

Cardinal Calls for Equality of Heterosexuals & Homosexuals

TheLocal.de

May 18, 2012

Some sex abusers should continue to work for the Catholic church, a bishop said on Thursday, while a cardinal argued for some homosexual relationships to be treated like heterosexual ones.

The contrasting comments came on the second day of the 98th Katholikentag, a major conference that is expected to draw 60,000 Catholics to Mannheim over the weekend.

There should not be a blanket ban from employing priests who have committed sexual crimes, argued Bishop of Trier Stephen Ackermann, the church official responsible for dealing with the sex abuse scandal in the church.

There are "a number of motives," Ackermann told a crowd listening to a debate on the subject. It made sense to differentiate among the different types of offenders, he said. "Otherwise we could slide into a dynamic that calls for all of

them to be imprisoned," he said.

His comments were met with disgust from a sexual abuse victim in the audience, who said it was incomprehensible that offenders continued to work for the church. . . .

But some momentum for change was evident from a speech by Berlin Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki.

He told a crowd on Thursday that the church should view long-term, faithful homosexual relationships as they do heterosexual ones.

"When two homosexuals take responsibility for one another, if they deal with each other in a faithful and long-term way, then you have to see it in the same way as heterosexual relationships," Woelki told an astonished crowd, according to a story in the Tagesspiegel newspaper.

Woelki acknowledged that the church saw the relationship between a man and a woman as the basis for creation, but added that it was time to think further about the church's attitude toward same sex relationships. ✦



Cardinal Woelki

Study challenges anti-gay perception of Latinos, especially Catholics

By Lornet Turnbull
The Seattle Times
April 13, 2012

A new national study challenges the widely held perception Latinos are persistently anti-gay.

Released Thursday by the research group Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS) and the Hispanic advocacy organization National Council of La Raza, it found Latino support for many pro-gay policies at least on par with that of the population as a whole.

Latinos in the SSRS study, for example, support same-sex marriage at a rate of 54 percent, compared with 53 percent of those in the general population who indicated such support in a Gallup poll last year.

And by even wider margins, respondents in the SSRS study favor policies aimed at protecting gays against hate crimes and discrimination related to jobs, housing and military service.

The findings come as a referendum seeking to place Washington's same-sex marriage law on the November ballot has begun circulating across the state and appearing in churches — including Catholic parishes, where many Latinos worship. Referendum backers, including the National Organization for Marriage, are hoping voters ultimately reject the new law.

With a population exceeding 50 million, Latinos represent the fastest-growing group in the U.S., one with a strong family-oriented culture and firm religious beliefs. And where they stand as a group on issues like same-sex marriage is gaining increased national attention.

Last month, for example, publicly released internal documents from the National Organization of Marriage revealed that group's strategy of trying to make opposition to same-sex marriage "a key badge of Latino identity."

Thursday's SSRS report, entitled "LGBT Acceptance and Support: The

Hispanic Perspective," was funded by the Arcus Foundation, an organization focused on environmental and social-justice issues, including equality for gays.

"There is a clear misperception among the general population about where Latinos stand" on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues, said David Dutwin, vice president of SSRS and author of the report.

"In reality, as society is evolving on LGBT issues and becoming more accepting of this community, so too are Hispanics."

Based in Media, Pa., SSRS is an independent research organization that conducts national and international population research work. Its researchers interviewed 1,001 Latinos 18 and older between March and April of last year.

To be sure, there is opposition among Latinos against all facets of gay

equality — just as there is in the population as a whole.

Some Latino groups, for example, rallied in New York last year against that state's same-sex marriage bill. And exit polls showed more than half of Latino voters in California backed Proposition 8, the ballot measure repealing that state's same-sex marriage law.

The study found foreign-born Latinos are more traditional and therefore tend to be less supportive of gay equality than those who were born in the U.S. or consider themselves "Americanized."

Latino men, Latino Republicans and Latinos who don't know or associate with anyone who is gay are also more likely to oppose gay rights.

And then there's the question of religion.

Three out of five Hispanics in the U.S. identify as Catholic. And while polls put support for same-sex marriage

among lay Catholics at around 56 percent, church teachings and most church leaders oppose same-sex marriage.

Among Catholic Latinos in the SSRS survey, 57 percent said they support same-sex marriage, while support among other Christians was around 43 percent.

"The Protestant/Catholic divide is huge ...," Dutwin said.

A partner with Washington United for Marriage, the coalition seeking to retain the state's same-sex marriage law, Seattle-based Entre Hermanos is working to take the message of LGBT equality to the Spanish-speaking population in the state, said its executive director, Marcos Martinez.

It is important, Martinez said, to frame the conversation of gay rights around family because that is such an important part of Latino life. ✦

Dignity President Offers Latino/a Insights at Briefing

Excerpted from *Dignity Dateline*
May 2012

Lourdes Rodriguez-Nogues, president of DignityUSA, a national organization of LGBT Catholics and supporters, recently was a panelist at a U.S. Congressional briefing on Latino/a support of LGBT issues. The panel, organized by La Raza, a national Latino/a advocacy organization, and sponsored by U.S. Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, focused on a newly released research study, *LGBT Acceptance and Support: The Hispanic Perspective*. DignityUSA's newsletter, *Dateline*, reports that Rodriguez-Nogues provided some cultural context for understanding the report:

"Discussing the implications of the survey data, Lourdes went on to explain that in Hispanic culture, the family and the group, rather than the individual, are



Lourdes Rodriguez-Nogues

the center of society. Therefore, efforts to create division in families, such as has been recently documented to be a tactic of the National Organization for Marriage, could be particularly damaging among Hispanics. She noted that the

strength of families, and the breadth of extended family, are reasons to keep creating opportunities and models for LGBT people to come out and make civil rights issues personal."

She also offered some personal background and insight:

"She reflected on her many years of being 'out in English, but not in Spanish,' and on the desire not to introduce a topic of prospective discord into her family as the reason for this. Lourdes said that when she ultimately did decide to come out to her mother, who like in most Hispanic families is both the head and the heart of the family, her mother responded with two questions. 'She asked me if I was happy, and if I had a relationship with God,' said Lourdes. 'Those were the things that mattered to her.' " ✦

—Marianne Duddy Burke

Church must change its ideas toward gay and lesbian employees

By Francis DeBernardo
National Catholic Reporter
May 3, 2012

In 1995, at a major national conference for Catholic pastoral ministers, I had a conversation with a friend of mine who is a lesbian woman, observing that so many of the conference participants were openly lesbian and gay people. My friend commented, "If all the lesbian and gay church workers left their jobs, the church would be bereft!" We chuckled at such a thought, though realizing that it was unrealistic to consider that this possibility would occur.

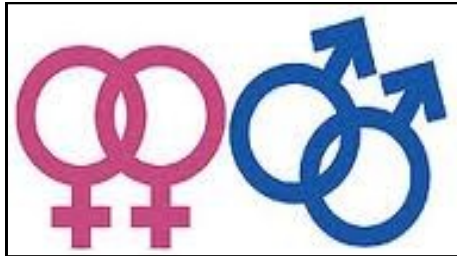
Today, I am not so sure.

Within the space of three weeks, two news stories reported that gay musicians were fired from their church jobs as parish music director and school teacher/parish music director. These stories, one which took place in Charlotte, N.C., and one in St. Louis, shared a common theme: New York state's marriage equality law beckoned both workers to marry their partners with whom each shared a two-decade-long relationship.

In 2010, a lesbian administrator at Benedictine University in Springfield, Ill., lost her job when she placed a wedding announcement in a local newspaper; Marquette University in Milwaukee rescinded an offer of employment for a dean's position because of the candidate's academic writings on lesbians; a parish theology teacher with 28 years of experience was fired in Denver when she placed a personal ad for a companionable relationship on a website.

While these five cases might not signal a strong trend, they should

strongly alert Catholics to a coming crisis in which my friend's prediction of a church without lesbian or gay workers could end up coming true. Eight states and the District of Columbia now have marriage equality laws on the books. As more and more lesbian and gay couples take advantage of the protections and benefits these laws provide, more and more potential employment conflicts can erupt in church institutions.



A number of questions arise from these cases and the future they portend. How just is it to fire someone whose life or practices are not in accord with official church teaching? Where do you draw the line? Do you get fired if you have remarried without an annulment? Do you get fired if you don't attend Mass on Sunday regularly? Do you get fired because you are a Protestant who does not recognize the Catholic hierarchical structure?

A more theological question is how perfect do all church employees have to be? We are all sinners who fall way short of the mark. Will our church employ only people whose lives are near blameless? Is this the logical result of the smaller, more purified church that Pope Benedict XVI has envisioned? I wonder what St. Augustine of Hippo, scourge of Donatists and Pelagians, would have to

say on this ecclesiological issue.

The church also needs to examine how to weigh adherence to sexual orthodoxy — or any orthodoxy for that matter — against a person's other characteristics: job performance, overall moral character, loyalty to the employing agency, to name just a few. In the two most recent incidents, news reports indicated that not only was there no problem with job performance in either case but, in fact, supervisors were aware of the nature of the employees' relationships. Does a relationship become problematic to employment only when it becomes public? Does serious sin only enter a relationship when the partners seek legal protection?

At the core of all these issues is the much more important question of the Catholic institution's poverty of discourse on the question of homosexuality. Because every issue concerning lesbian and gay people is seen through the lens of sexual ethics, there is precious little else that can be said that does not echo a sexual perspective. The contemporary hierarchy's focus on the sexual issues of lesbian and gay people has prevented these leaders from developing any other discourse on homosexuality. Catholic thought in the area of homosexuality desperately needs to mature beyond the level of "Don't."

For example, while church officials express in their documents that lesbian and gay people should be accepted with "compassion, respect, and sensitivity" (according to the catechism), why has this line of argument never been developed or applied to real-life situations with the vigor that the teaching on sexual

expression is applied to policy questions of relationship and marriage? No hierarchical statements were issued when the national conversation was focused on the topic of bullying toward sexual and gender minorities that results in a higher rate of suicide for them. Similarly, there has been no serious thought given to the question of employment of lesbian and gay people other than in simply applying sexual prohibitions.

Austrian Cardinal Christoph Schönborn's recent support of the election of Florian Stangl, a partnered gay man, to his parish council offers a precedent that other prelates can emulate. Dialogue, not dismissal, was Schönborn's approach.

If the employment of lesbian and gay people in church institutions does not get resolved more positively than the recent American cases above exhibit, the church stands to lose its position as an effective agent for good in the world. Not only will the church lose the gifts, talents and expertise of the many lesbian and gay people it currently employs, but church institutions with professional standing, such as hospitals and universities, will lose their ability to attract qualified personnel, both heterosexual and homosexual. For the good of gay and lesbian people, the church, the world and themselves, Catholic leaders need to learn to expand their ability to think, speak and act on homosexuality. If they don't, we will all be bereft. ✦

Francis DeBernardo is executive director of New Ways Ministry.

Scouts' discriminatory policy finds no support in Catholic teachings

By Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata
The National Catholic Reporter
 July 27, 2012

Because the U.S. Catholic hierarchy strongly opposes legislation that would grant lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people fuller equality, Catholics can be forgiven for assuming that church teaching always supports one particular "side" in our country's culture wars.

The Boy Scouts of America, for instance, have recently reaffirmed their policy of excluding gay boys and gay leaders from that organization. At first blush, the scouts' position might seem consistent with our bishops' increasingly hard line on LGBT issues, but we believe a closer reading of the church's teaching should lead Catholics to resist this wrongheaded and wrong-hearted policy.

As early as 1976, in *To Live in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Reflection on the Moral Life*, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (then known as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops) wrote that, rather than being ostracized, gays and lesbians "should have an active role in the Christian community."

The church's hierarchy is in no way more progressive now than it was then, yet the bishops returned to this theme in their 1998 pastoral message *Always Our Children*:

The teachings of the Church make it clear that the fundamental human rights

of homosexual persons must be defended and that all of us must strive to eliminate any forms of injustice, oppression, or violence against them (cf. *The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, 1986, no. 10). It is not sufficient only to avoid unjust discrimination. Homosexual persons "must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2358).

The bishops solidify this theme in their recommendation to "Welcome homosexual persons into the faith community."

The Boy Scouts have chosen not to accept gay boys age 11-17 with respect, compassion and sensitivity. They have chosen instead to reject them at precisely that time when gay youth need the support of their communities most.

Peer-reviewed research establishes that LGBT youth are at far greater risk of social isolation, parental rejection, depression, verbal harassment, physical violence and suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. The leaders of any organization dedicated to young people's well-being are familiar with this data. They know gay boys need the sort of nurturing that organizations like the Boy Scouts provide.

Yet, for reasons they have not articulated, the scouts have chosen to con-

tinue ostracizing these vulnerable adolescents, thereby subjecting them to another rejection that can only exacerbate the risks they already face.

As parents of a straight son who was a scout and a gay son who was not, we'd like to know the scouts' reasoning. Some



writers have speculated that the anonymous panel convened to review the matter was made aware that many scouts come from Catholic and Mormon families, and that these two churches sponsor large numbers of scout troops.

If the scouts accepted gay boys into their troops, the reasoning goes, these churches might react negatively, leading to a significant thinning in the ranks. We can only pray that this wasn't the case. There is nothing in official church teaching that justifies the scouts' discriminatory policy, and it is up to us, as Catholics, to make that clear.

In central Massachusetts, 15 scout leaders wrote to their local newspaper disassociating themselves from the scouts' policy: "We want to reassure you, our friends, neighbors and colleagues, that ... Troop 500 invites the participation of all interested 11-to-17-year-old boys and their parents or guardians without regard to sexual orientation."

We call on Catholic bishops, parishes, schools and parents to take similar action. The Boy Scouts have made a significant moral miscalculation, and the church has an opportunity to help them to correct it.

We can begin by making it clear that gay boys, some just beginning to realize their orientation, are welcome in all Catholic-sponsored scout troops. We must say now what our bishops have been saying for years: God loves every human person, and we cannot do less.

Casey and Mary Ellen Lopata are the co-founders of *Fortunate Families*, a national network of Catholic parents and family members of LGBT people and a member of the *Equally Blessed* coalition.

Girl Scouts & LCWR: Is the Church sending a message to women?

By Marianne T. Duddy-Burke
WashingtonPost.com/OnFaith
 May 23, 2012

I was a Girl Scout. My daughter is a Girl Scout. As Catholics, we are stunned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' decision to investigate an organization that we both deeply love.

It is tempting to laugh off this news as further evidence of how profoundly out of touch many of our bishops are with the lives and concerns of the people who fill their pews. But the hierarchy's attempt to exert pressure on an organization that has helped millions of girls grow into strong, self-reliant and public-spirited women is only the most recent episode in an increasingly troubling sequence of events.

In March of 2010, the U.S. bishops' Committee on Doctrine authorized a statement critiquing "Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God," by Sister Elizabeth Johnson, one of this country's leading Catholic theologians. In compiling the report on a three-year-old book the bishops violated their own guidelines about communicating with a theologian whose work is under investigation, according to reports. Johnson said she was never invited to discuss the book with the bishops.

In January 2012, after years of pressure from Catholic bishops across the United States, Susan G. Komen for the Cure announced it would no longer provide grants that have allowed Planned Parenthood to provide mammograms to women who could not afford them. The decision was reversed after a public outcry.

In February, embroiled in a controversy with the Obama administration over the coverage of contraception in the Affordable Care Act, the bishops supported legislation that would have allowed any employer who voiced a moral objection to the use of contraception to

avoid including it in employee's health coverage. Had the "Blunt Amendment" passed, it potentially could have deprived millions of women of access to contraception—including many women who use "birth control" pills for non-contraceptive purposes.

In April, the Vatican censured the Leadership Conference on Women Religious, which represents the great majority of nuns in the United States, stripping



it of its autonomy, and placing it in a kind of receivership under Archbishop Peter Sartain of Seattle. The report criticizes the sisters—many of whom spend their lives in service to the poor and marginalized—for not spending enough time promoting Catholic doctrine on abortion.

And now the bishops have trained their attention on the Girls Scouts, thanks to a persistent campaign of innuendo by conservative interest groups. These critics now demand the Scouts refrain from informing young women about the work of the Sierra Club, Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam, because these groups believe that it is not immoral to use artificial contraception. That the bishops take the allegations of these fringe groups seriously is evidence of their eagerness to exert control over women's lives.

In each of these instances, the bishops have behaved as though concerns over doctrinal integrity or religious liberty excuses them from considering the

consequences of their actions: a brilliant theologian may be marginalized; poor women may not receive the mammograms that might save their lives; millions of U.S. citizens may be denied access to much-needed medicines; the needy may lose their greatest friends within the U. S. Catholic Church, and girls may be instructed not to join an organization that will help them to grow into proud and self-reliant women. All this because the bishops have picked up the scent of doctrinal error, discernible only to them and their political allies.

The bishops may not acknowledge it, but our church's moral authority has been weakened by their pursuit of an

agenda that demonstrates a passion for power, rather than for service, and a willingness to put women's lives and ministries at risk to achieve their political ends. At first glance it may seem that the hierarchy's investigation of the Girl Scouts provides an opportunity to have a good laugh at the bishops' expense. But it is women and girls who are paying the price.

Marianne T. Duddy-Burke is executive director of *DignityUSA*, the leading organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Catholics, their families, friends and allies.

Gay ministry group refuses to sign oath

(Continued from page 1)
 source director, told NCR. . . .

In an eight-page follow-up letter to the January meeting, dated April 15, 2011, the board sought to clarify questions about the association and its stance on several of the bishop's concerns, one of which was its usage of the terms "gay" and "lesbian" on its website and in its publications -- a concern that "honestly surprised" the board.

Fitzmaurice said that Cordileone said during their Jan. 7 meeting that the terms weren't in the church's vocabulary, and were promoted by groups opposed to the church's moral teaching.

The board pointed out it in the letter that archdiocesan ministries in Los Angeles and Chicago use "gay" and "lesbian" in their titles. In addition, the Oakland diocese has a page titled "Gay and Lesbian Ministry" under the family life ministries section of its website.

"The average Catholic who identifies as gay or lesbian is not making a statement about their sexual activity, their political party, their views on same-sex marriage, or their 'lifestyle.' ... these terms are actually used to shift the focus

away from sexual behavior (which "homosexual" clearly evokes) toward the matters of orientation and identity, which are acknowledged by the Church," the letter stated.

The board agreed to "be more conscientious of our use of language," and to utilize Church language -- "persons with a homosexual inclination" -- when presenting church teaching, and "gay" and "lesbian" when communicating with those to whom they minister. . . .

When asked how or if CALGM would continue its ministry should Cordileone declare it not authentically Catholic, Fitzmaurice stated that "the need for our ministry remains, and we will continue to do our pastoral work and will respond to opportunities for dialogue with our Church leaders."

Lopata said it would be "a real loss for the church" if CALGM could not continue its work.

"If there's not that visible association with this positive perspective for gay and lesbian people within the church that is recognized by the church, the church would be much impoverished because of that," he said.

Catholic Nun Challenges Church's Stance on Gay Marriage

By **Nayana Davis**
Towson Patch
Towson, Maryland
June 9, 2012

On the heels of the Vatican's dispute with American nuns, one sister is taking a defiant stand against the Catholic hierarchy's opposition to gay marriage.

Jeannine Gramick is the main speaker for a Saturday program where Catholics supporting Maryland's marriage equality law discuss ways to prevent the legislation from being repealed on referendum during the November elections. The gathering runs from 1 to 4 p.m. at Goucher College's Alumni Hall.

"It's a great shame that the leaders of my church—the bishops—are all out there campaigning against marriage equality," she said. "I want to be proud of my church and that makes me very ashamed."

Gramick, the 69-year-old co-founder of New Ways Ministry—which services homosexuals—has attracted the disapproval of Catholic officials as well.

"No one should be misled by the claim that New Way Ministry provides an authentic interpretation of Catholic teaching and an authentic Catholic pastoral practice," wrote Cardinal Francis George, former president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in a 2010 statement. "Their claim to be Catholic only confuses the faithful regarding the authentic teaching and ministry of the Church with respect to persons with a homosexual inclination."

Gramick's Revelation

Growing up in the 1940s and 50s, Gramick described her hometown of Philadelphia as a "Catholic ghetto" that was blindly obedient to church leaders.

"You didn't associate with non-Catholics," she said. "I probably unconsciously thought that being Catholic made you superior."

Gramick, now a resident of Mt. Rainier—a Washington, D.C. suburb—entered the convent at the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Baltimore when she was 18 years old. She said she first heard God's call to become a nun as a young child.

"You had this idea that nuns and priests were really close to God, so if you

really loved God, you became a priest or a nun," she said. "Of course, we now know that's bad theology."

Though Gramick was initially content to accept the religious norm, she said the Second Vatican Council—a series of sessions that ran from 1962 to 1965 where church leaders addressed the faith in relation to the modern world—changed her outlook on Catholic conformity.

"The council had urged the nuns and priests to adapt, to be open-minded, to question," she said.

Growing Curiosity

When Gramick first became exposed to gay culture while a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania in the early 1970s, she indulged her curiosity rather than shy away from a lifestyle the Catholic Church condemns.

At the time, the Episcopal parish at the school was working on outreach efforts to gay students. She asked a pastor if she could serve drinks at a dance for the community.

"It was pure voyeurism," she said with a laugh. "I was curious."

Gramick soon befriended a gay man who joined the Episcopal Church after being rejected by Catholic leaders.

"He told me priests were throwing him out of confession when he told them about his homosexuality," she said.

Shortly afterwards, she became involved in weekly liturgies at her friend's apartment catering to the gay community.

"These people were just normal people," she said. "They were so reverent, so grateful that they could have the sacraments; that there was a priest and a sister who didn't recoil from them, who welcomed them."

'Hatchet-Man'

Gramick and ordained priest Robert Nugent founded New Ways Ministry in 1977. The organization—which she continues to work with today—is an advo-

cacy and research Catholic center.

Response from church leaders hasn't been favorable.

Gramick said the now-deceased James Hickey, who was a Washington, D.C. archbishop, and William Lori, then an auxiliary bishop, made several complaints against her and New Ways Ministry to the Vatican. She said Lori was mainly responsible for the dealings with the church's top leadership.



Sister Jeannine Gramick

"I've never said this myself but [Lori] was known around the diocese as Cardinal Hickey's hatchet-man," she said.

Despite multiple attempts, Patch was unable to receive comment from Lori. Sean Caine, a spokesman for the Archdiocese of Baltimore—where Lori now serves as archbishop—referred Patch to the 2010 statement from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops denouncing New Ways Ministry.

"New Ways Ministry has no approval or recognition from the Catholic Church and that they cannot speak on behalf of the Catholic faithful in the United States," George wrote.

The statement can be read in full on the organization's website.

Caine told Patch that Lori affirmed the statement on Wednesday.

A Tough Fight

After nearly 40 years with the School Sisters, Gramick had to leave the

community because of Vatican letters asking the sisters to dismiss her if she continues with the ministry. She then joined the Sisters of Loretto, who also received threats from the church leadership but have not taken action against her.

"I discerned and felt that God was still asking this of me; to continue my work," she said.

With the conservative-minded Lori at the helm of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, however, Gramick is bracing for a tough fight.

"[Lori's] very virulent," she said. "You hate to judge others' motives—you shouldn't. I guess I could applaud him for being an advocate for what he allegedly believes in...I just don't agree."

Church vs. Parishioners

Patrick Wojahn and Dave Kolesar, College Park residents who have been together more than 10 years, are staunch advocates of Gramick's cause.

The couple was legally married in D.C. in January 2011. Prior to that, they participated in an unrecognized religious marriage ceremony in 2005 through Dignity Washington, a church not supported by the Vatican that caters to Catholics and other Christians in the homosexual community.

"I think one thing I discovered growing up Catholic is that the institutional church doesn't necessarily speak for the parishioners," Kolesar said. "I think homosexuality and gay marriage is one area where the church leadership and laity diverge."

In fact, a 2011 survey by the Public Religion Research Institute shows that 52 percent of Catholics believe that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry.

Wojahn, a College Park councilman, said it's not the church's place to comment on civil marriages.

"I'm not going to tell the Catholic Church what they should or should not believe," he said. "But our state shouldn't discriminate."

Gramick said she plans to do her best to avoid just that.

"What I believe the Vatican is trying to do is stamp out questioning, to stamp out dissent; to really destroy any kind of thinking that's different," she said. ✦

St. Nicholas Parish Celebrates 10 Years of LGBT Ministry

St. Nicholas Parish, Evanston, Illinois, recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of their Gay, Lesbian, Families and Friends Ministry. You can read a

history of the ministry at www.stnicksglff.org/history.html.

As part of the celebration, David Phillipart, parish director of liturgy,

wrote a blessing prayer for those involved in the ministry, of which excerpts are below. Parishioner Debbie Winarski commented, "It really was a beautiful

moment—the kind that gives one strength to keep going."

To St. Nicholas Parish's outreach ministry, we say: "Ad multos annos!" ✦

St. Nicholas Parish, LGBT Ministry Blessing Prayer Excerpt

For a full text of the prayer by David Phillipart, go to www.newwaysministryblog.wordpress.com/2012/05/24/all-are-welcome-st-nicholas-parish-celebrates-10-years-of-lgbt-ministry/

Holy God,
in love you created us: men, women, and children
In your own divine image and likeness
enlivening the universe with our variety of gifts, traits, abilities, skills, and circumstances—
faults and foibles, too.
You created us to love you and to love one another
in many and wonderful ways.
So the love of Abraham and Sarah
brought to birth your people,
Ruth and Naomi's loving faithfulness
to each other shines as a sign of your love for us,
and the deep devotion of David and Jonathan
to each other reveals how complete
is your commitment to us.
Rising from the tomb and ascending to you,
Christ makes new our capacity to love each other.
No longer merely Jew nor Greek, slave or free,
male or female,
we love each other
as heirs to your promise,
your daughters and sons,
sisters and brothers of Jesus.



St. Nicholas parishioners bless those of their community who are involved in the parish's Gay, Lesbian, Families and Friends Ministry, on the occasion of the ministry's 10th anniversary. (Photo by Emily Bradfield)



PARISHES

Alabama
Decatur: Annunciation of the Lord
Montgomery: St. Bede

Arizona
Chandler: St. Andrew
Glendale: St. Thomas More
Mesa: St. Bridget
Phoenix: St. Matthew
Scottsdale: St. Patrick
Tucson: St. Cyril of Alexandria,
Ss. Peter and Paul, St. Pius X,
Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Odilia

California
Berkeley: Holy Spirit Parish
Burney: St Francis of Assisi
Carlsbad: St. Patrick
Claremont: Our Lady of the Assumption
El Cajon: St. Luke
Encino: Our Lady of Grace
Escondido: St. Timothy
Fremont: St. Joseph - Mission San Jose
Goleta: St. Mark Univ. Parish
Hawthorne: St. Joseph (Spanish)
Hayward: All Saints
LaPuente: St. Martha
Lemon Grove: St. John of the Cross
Long Beach: St. Matthew
Los Angeles: Blessed Sacrament,
Christ the King, Mother of Good Counsel, St. Camillus Center-LA
USC Medical Center (Spanish),
St. Agatha, St. Paul the Apostle
North Hollywood: St. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. Patrick
Oakland: Our Lady of Lourdes
Oceanside: St. Thomas More
Orange: Holy Family Cathedral
Pasadena: Assumption of the B.V.M.
Ross: St. Anselm
Sacramento: St. Francis of Assisi
San Carlos: St. Charles
San Diego: Ascension, San Rafael,
St. Jude Shrine
San Francisco: Most Holy Redeemer,
Old St. Mary Cathedral, St. Agnes,
St. Dominic
San Jose: St. Julie Billiart,
St. Martin of Tours (Emmaus Community)
San Luis Obispo: Old Mission of San Luis Obispo
San Raphael: Church of San Raphael & Mission San Raphael Arcangel
Santa Barbara: OL of Guadalupe
Santa Cruz: Holy Cross
Santa Monica: St. Monica
Simi Valley: St. Rose of Lima
Spring Valley: Santa Sophia
Stanford: Catholic Community at Stanford University
South Pasadena: Holy Familhy
Valinda: St. Martha
Vernon: Holy Angels Catholic Church of the Deaf
Walnut Creek: St. John Vianney
West Hollywood: St. Ambrose,
St. Victor
Whittier: St. Mary of the Assumption

Colorado
Arvada: Spirit of Christ
Avon: St. Edward
Colorado Springs: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Sacred Heart
Denver: St. Dominic, Christ the King, Mount Carmel
Fort Collins: Blessed John XXIII
Genessee: St. Frances Cabrini Shrine
Highlands Ranch: Pax Christi
Littleton: Light of the World, St Frances

Gay-friendly Catholic Parishes & Communities

Below is a list of known “gay-friendly” Catholic parishes and intentional Eucharistic communities. Thank you for helping us add to this growing list! If you are aware of a parish or community that is known as welcoming to lesbian/gay Catholics, please let us know. Tell us if this welcome is because of a support program, spirituality group, mission statement, participation in gay community events, or involvement with parents. Parishes are listed first and intentional Eucharistic communities follow. For links to many of these parishes’ websites, go to www.NewWaysMinistry.org/

Cabrini	<i>Kansas City:</i> Guardian Angels, St. Francis Xavier, St. James <i>St. Joseph:</i> St. Francis Xavier <i>St. Louis:</i> St. Cronan, St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Pius V	Old St. Mary, St. John the Evangelist, St. Vincent DePaul
Connecticut <i>Hartford:</i> St. Patrick-St. Anthony		Rhode Island <i>Providence:</i> St. Francis Chapel, St. Mary’s <i>Wickford:</i> St. Bernard
Delaware <i>North Wilmington:</i> Holy Child <i>Wilmington:</i> St. Joseph	Montana <i>Billings:</i> Holy Rosary, St. Pius X	Tennessee <i>Memphis:</i> Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
District of Columbia Holy Trinity, St. Aloysius, St. Matthew Cathedral	Nebraska <i>Omaha:</i> Holy Family, Sacred Heart	Texas <i>Colleyville:</i> Good Shepherd <i>Dallas:</i> Holy Trinity <i>El Paso:</i> All Saints <i>Houston:</i> St. Anne <i>Plano:</i> St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
Florida <i>Cocoa Beach:</i> Our Savior <i>Daytona Beach:</i> Our Lady of Lourdes <i>Ft. Lauderdale:</i> St. Anthony, St. Maurice <i>Naples:</i> St. John the Evangelist <i>St. Petersburg:</i> Holy Cross <i>Tampa:</i> Sacred Heart, Christ the King	Nevada <i>Las Vegas:</i> Christ the King, Guardian Angel Cathedral	Virginia <i>Arlington:</i> Our Lady Queen of Peace <i>Richmond:</i> Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Sacred Heart Parish <i>Roanoke:</i> St. Gerard <i>Triangle:</i> St. Francis <i>Virginia Beach:</i> St. Nicholas
Georgia <i>Atlanta:</i> Shrine of the Immaculate Conception	New Hampshire <i>Merrimack:</i> St. John Neumann <i>Pelham:</i> St. Patrick	Washington <i>Seattle:</i> St. Benedict, Prince of Peace Newman Center <i>Tacoma:</i> St. Leo
Idaho <i>Boise:</i> St. Mary	New Jersey <i>Lawrenceville:</i> St. Ann <i>Long Beach Island:</i> St. Francis of Assisi <i>Maplewood:</i> St. Joseph <i>Tinton Falls:</i> St. Anselm	Wisconsin <i>Madison:</i> Our Lady Queen of Peace, <i>Menomonee Falls:</i> Good Shepherd <i>Milwaukee:</i> Good Shepherd, Prince of Peace, Trinity-Guadalupe
Illinois <i>Berwyn:</i> St. Mary of the Celle <i>Chicago:</i> Immaculate Conception, St. Clement, St. Gertrude, St. Gregory, St. Peter, St. Sylvester, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Thomas the Apostle, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Old St. Patrick <i>Clarendon Hills:</i> Notre Dame <i>Country Club Hills:</i> St. Emeric <i>Evanston:</i> St. Nicholas <i>Johnston City:</i> St. Paul <i>Morton Grove:</i> St. Martha <i>Oak Park:</i> Ascension, St. Catherine of Sienna-St. Lucy <i>Schaumburg:</i> St. Marcelline	New Mexico <i>Albuquerque:</i> Holy Family, Shrine of St. Bernadette <i>Espanola:</i> Sacred Heart of Jesus	Canada <i>Montreal:</i> Holy Cross <i>Ottawa:</i> St. Joseph <i>Toronto:</i> Our Lady of Lourdes
Indiana <i>Evansville:</i> St. Mary <i>Indianapolis:</i> St. Thomas Aquinas	New York <i>Albany:</i> St. Vincent DePaul <i>Baldwinsville:</i> St. Augustine <i>Bellmore:</i> St. Barnabas the Apostle <i>Bellport:</i> Mary Immaculate <i>Binghamton:</i> St. Francis of Assisi <i>Brooklyn:</i> St. Andrew the Apostle, St. Boniface, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, Immaculate Heart of-Mary <i>Deer Park:</i> Ss. Cyril and Methodius <i>East Islip:</i> St. Mary <i>Elmira:</i> St. Mary <i>Fairport:</i> Church of the Assumption <i>Henrietta:</i> Good Shepherd <i>Manhattan:</i> Holy Name of Jesus, St. Francis Xavier, St. Paul the Apostle, Church of the Ascension, St. Francis of Assisi <i>Pittsford:</i> Church of the Transfiguration <i>Rochester:</i> Blessed Sacrament, St. Mary (Downtown), St. Monica <i>Syracuse:</i> St. Lucy, All Saints <i>Utica:</i> Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Historic Old St. John’s <i>Wading River:</i> St. John the Baptist <i>Wantagh:</i> St. Frances de Chantal <i>Westbury:</i> St. Brigid	England <i>London:</i> Our Lady of the Assumption & St. Gregory
Iowa <i>Coralville:</i> St. Thomas More	New Mexico <i>Albuquerque:</i> Holy Family, Shrine of St. Bernadette <i>Espanola:</i> Sacred Heart of Jesus	INTENTIONAL EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITIES
Kentucky <i>Louisville:</i> Epiphany, Cathedral of the Assumption, St. William	North Carolina <i>Charlotte:</i> St. Peter <i>Durham:</i> Immaculate Conception <i>Fayetteville:</i> St. Patrick <i>Raleigh:</i> St. Francis of Assisi	Arizona <i>Scottsdale:</i> Franciscan Renewal Center
Louisiana <i>New Orleans:</i> St. Augustine	Ohio <i>Akron:</i> St. Bernard <i>Cincinnati:</i> St. George-St. Monica, St. Robert Bellarmine <i>Cleveland:</i> Ascension of Our Lord, St. Malachi, St. Martha <i>Columbus:</i> St. Thomas More Newman Center <i>Fairlawn:</i> St. Hilary <i>Mentor:</i> St. John Vianney <i>University Heights:</i> Church of the Gesu <i>Westlake:</i> St. Ladislav <i>Wooster:</i> St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception	California <i>Orange:</i> Koinonia <i>Pleasanton:</i> Catholic Community of Pleasanton
Maine <i>Portland:</i> Sacred Heart-St. Dominic <i>Saco:</i> Most Holy Trinity	Oregon <i>Beaverton:</i> Mission of the Atonement <i>Portland:</i> St. Andrew, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Phillip Neri, Downtown Chapel (St. Vincent de Paul)	District of Columbia Communitas
Maryland <i>Baltimore:</i> Corpus Christi, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Matthew, St. Vincent dePaul <i>Columbia:</i> St. John the Evangelist <i>Gaithersburg:</i> St. Rose of Lima <i>Hagerstown:</i> St. Ann <i>Severn:</i> St. Bernadette	Pennsylvania <i>Huntingdon:</i> Most Holy Trinity <i>Philadelphia:</i> Old St. Joseph,	Florida <i>Tampa:</i> Franciscan Center
Massachusetts <i>Boston:</i> Paulist Center, St. Anthony Shrine, St. Cecilia <i>East Longmeadow:</i> St. Michael <i>Newton:</i> St. Ignatius <i>Provincetown:</i> St. Peter <i>Sharon:</i> Our Lady of Sorrows <i>Springfield:</i> Sacred Heart		Maryland <i>Greenbelt:</i> Greenbelt Catholic Community
Michigan <i>Ann Arbor:</i> St. Mary Student Parish <i>Detroit:</i> St. Leo, Christ the King <i>St. Ignace:</i> St. Ignatius Loyola <i>Westland:</i> Ss. Simon and Jude		Michigan <i>Grand Rapids:</i> Marywood <i>Kalamazoo:</i> Lambda Catholics
Minnesota <i>Minneapolis:</i> St. Frances Cabrini, St. Joan of Arc		Minnesota <i>Minneapolis:</i> Spirit of St. Stephen's Catholic Community
Missouri		Oregon <i>Portland:</i> Journey and Koinonia Catholic Community
		Washington <i>Olympia:</i> Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community
		Wisconsin <i>Madison:</i> Holy Wisdom Monastery
		To add your faith community to our list, please contact New Ways Ministry at info@newwaysministry.org or call 301-277-5674.

Catholic Media Award to “Modern Family”

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
May 12, 2012

Catholics in Media Associates (CIMA) awarded its highest television honor this year to *Modern Family*, an ABC comedy which includes a gay couple with an adopted baby as part of its regular cast. According to the organization’s website:

“This remains far and away the best prime-time sitcom: crisp and farcical, but very kind. This fast-paced mockumentary perfectly captures the experience of parenthood.”

In describing the depiction of the gay couple, Mitchell and Cameron, and their adopted Vietnamese daughter, Lily, the CIMA site states:

“They’re learning all the parenting ropes as they go. Fortunately, they have the loving support of their extended, eclectic, ever-funny family.”

CIMA’s description of itself on its website is:

“Catholics in Media Associates was formed by working professionals in the entertainment industry whose initial purpose was to share personal concerns of faith and spirituality as it is experienced in the workplace.

“From that early beginning came the CIMA Awards, recognizing those pro-

jects and people in the entertainment industry who, by their work, have made clearer the Word of God. These awards were created to promote and applaud films, television programs and other entertainment forms that uplift the spirit and help us better understand what it is to be part of the human family.”

Their awards to television and film are sometimes referred to as the “Catholic Emmys” and “Catholic Oscars.”

Presenting the award to *Modern Family* certainly raised a few eyebrows in the media world, but certainly in a positive direction. The award went a long way to help dispel the enduring myth that Catholics don’t support marriage equality. Some responses from news accounts about the award tell the story:

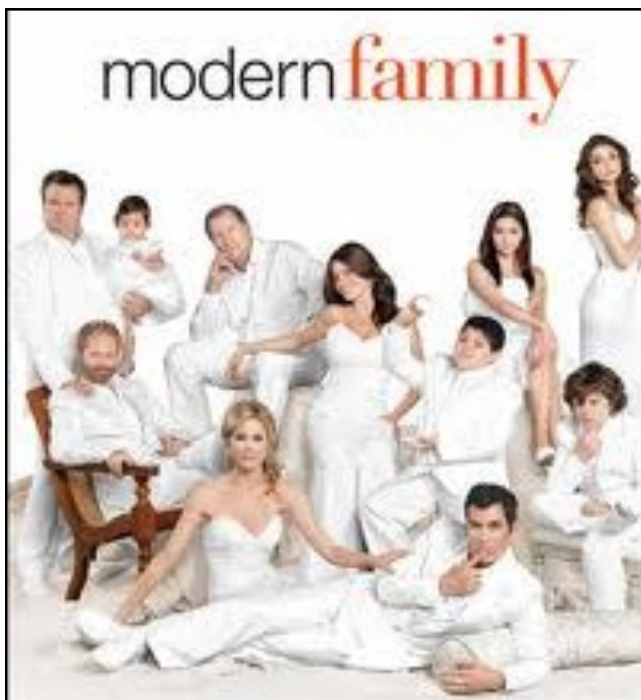
Yahoo.com News:

” ‘Modern Family’ might not be the most obvious choice to be showered with accolades by a religious organization, but the ABC comedy was honored by the Catholics in Media Associates over the

weekend anyway.”

LezGetReal.com:

“There are those on both sides of the



LGBT debate who love to push this false decision between religion and sexual identity. There are, of course, those in between who want to make it clear that you do not have to choose between religion and being gay. Catholics in Media

Associates honored the show ‘Modern Family’ this past weekend.”

The Hollywood Reporter:

“Referred to as the ‘Catholic Oscar,’ though in this case it would be the ‘Catholic Emmy,’ the Catholics in Media Associates has given ABC’s *Modern Family* its 2012 television award.

“That may come as a shock for some as the series has come under fire from conservative groups for its representation of alternative lifestyles with Cameron (Eric Stonestreet) and Mitch’s (Jesse Tyler Ferguson) gay marriage.”

The Human Rights Campaign:

“The 11-time Emmy winning *Modern Family* can add another accolade to its list: the Television Award from Catholics in Media Associates.

“Conservative groups have targeted the ABC comedy for featuring a loving and committed gay family, or even for acknowledging that gay people exist.

“However, this award from a leading Catholic body sends a strong message that ‘family values’ can incorporate all kinds of families, including LGBT ones.”

Congratulations not only to *Modern Family*, but to CIMA for their wise choice! ✦

The Growing Abuse of 'Religious Freedom'

By Francis DeBernardo

Executive Director, New Ways Ministry
The Advocate
July 5, 2012

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has worked fiercely to deny LGBT rights, and now it’s using the banner of religious freedom to provide political cover for antigay positions. Although we hope any voices that still prefer discrimination over equality will be drowned out soon enough, the bishops’ campaign is more than just background noise.

The Catholic hierarchy is trying to fundamentally change the legal understanding of individual liberties, weighting the supposed rights of religious institutions more heavily than individual rights. At New Ways Ministry, we think there are good secular and religious arguments for not twisting the law into a tool for discrimination. Last fall, the Catholic bishops created the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty to protect against a host of alleged threats, with five of the six predictably having to do with sexuality. The committee opposes same-sex marriage and endorses “ministerial privilege,” which sets different employment standards for religious groups, allowing discrimination that is illegal for other employers. In addition, religious institutions should not have to cover contraception in employee health plans; Catholic charities should continue to be awarded federal funds to serve victims of human trafficking while refusing to provide a full range of reproductive services; and international HIV prevention programs should not require condom distribution.

None of these positions are in line with the beliefs of Catholics in the United States, placing the bishops well outside the mainstream.

But bitter experience has shown that once an unjust policy is set, it can be difficult for our legal system to set it right. The bishops are attempting to create the idea that the First Amendment is really a blank check for religious institutions to do what they like with public funds, when in reality these time-tested protections are for the individual’s freedom to worship, and freedom from religion. This strategy exploits the guarantees of basic freedoms for the purposes of



LGBT Catholics and supporters outside the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC.

discrimination. But the bishops’ lobby is known for precisely this kind of surreptitious move — playing on Americans’ reluctance to be told they are standing in the way of “Catholics” (read: the bishops’) religious freedom. The bishops have convinced some lawmakers that the majority of Catholics need and want the assurance that others’ freedom to marry or use contraception be denied for religious reasons.

American Catholics understand and accept the respect for individual conscience, which includes the respect for others’ right to follow their own conscience, even if the bishops don’t. A 2011 Public Religion Research Institute poll found that Catholics are more supportive of same-sex unions than any other Christian denomination or Americans overall. But there are already some worrisome precedents set in the name of all Catholics, among them Catholic Charities’ choice to give up its foster care and adoption services in the District of Columbia and Illinois rather than allow same-sex couples to adopt or same-sex partners of employees to have health insurance. When a Missouri music teacher was recently fired by the diocese for merely discussing his plan to wed his male partner, it was exactly the sort of employer discrimination the bishops are

fighting to protect.

The LGBT community has suffered under the law, both by discriminatory statutes and from a lack of recognition for dimensions of our lives that don’t fit within existing legal norms. But our faith

in the law and our respect for religious differences are what have many of us invested in the painstaking process of nurturing good, rights-affirming policies while uprooting injustice. Our fundamental objection to the bishops’ religious freedom campaign is that it’s a misuse of the law — an attempt to create new rights for religious institutions while trampling on the rights long-guaranteed to all individuals.

The Fortnight for Freedom, a series of public actions organized by the bishops to highlight their religious liberty crusade, will coincide with Pride parades around the country. LGBT people in some states have more reason to celebrate than others, and it’s heartening that President Obama has come out in favor of marriage equality. Policy makers can’t just stop with the endorsement of same-sex marriage, however. They need to affirm that “freedom” still means the freedom for individuals to live according to their conscience, not the freedom of religious groups to redefine the law. ✦

Cardinals Support International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

Bondings 2.0

NewWaysMinistryBlog.wordpress.com
May 17, 2012

Today, May 17th, is the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, and it will be marked around the world with commemorations in scores of countries.

In Italy this year, the Catholic LGBT organization Gionata (translated “Jonathan”) will host prayer vigils around their country. Three of those vigils will be supported by the local Catholic Cardinal in each location.

***GayStarNews* reports:**

“Three Italian Catholic cardinals have agreed to prayer vigils held by the religious group Gionata for the victims of gay hate and discrimination for the first time.

“LGBT groups will pray for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Milan, Florence and Palermo, in Sicily as part of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) to be celebrated . . . in an estimated 100 countries around the world. . . .

“Cardinal Paolo Romeo, in Palermo, . . . [has] backed it, even though he banned the vigil last year. The liturgy there will be celebrated at 9pm . . . in the San Gabriele Arcangelo church.”

The cardinal in Milan is Cardinal Angelo Scola; in Florence, it is Cardinal Giuseppe Bettori.

Let us keep in prayer today all the victims and perpetrators of homophobia and transphobia. Let us pray, also, in thanksgiving for these three Catholic Cardinals who are supporting these prayer vigils. ✦