

BANDINGS

Vol. 29, No. 4

A Publication of New Ways Ministry

Winter 2009-10

Victory over same-sex marriage comes at a high price

By Chuck Colbert
NCRonline.org
November 6, 2009

After a campaign that saw significant Catholic activism on both sides of the issue, Maine voters rejected a law that would have allowed same-sex marriages.

Fifty-three percent of voters said yes to overturning a law passed by the state legislature and signed by the governor in May.

But in Washington state, it appeared that a referendum to uphold a law granting same-sex domestic partners the same rights as married spouses would be narrowly approved, 51 percent to 49 percent. The referendum had been opposed by Washington's Catholic bishops.

About 700 Maine Catholics signed either a newspaper ad or a declaration of support for same-sex marriage being circulated by the Portland-based Catholics for Marriage Equality.

Fifteen percent of Maine's population is Catholic, and Portland's Bishop Richard

J. Malone was a visible and vocal leader in the campaign to repeal the law. The diocese gave as much as \$550,000 to the effort. The Catholic fraternal organization, the Knights of Columbus, gave another \$50,000 to the cause.

Malone starred in a video played in Catholic churches ahead of Election Day, and the archdiocese supplied seven weeks of bulletin inserts urging Catholics to overturn the law.

In a statement released the day after the vote, Malone thanked the people of Maine "for protecting and reaffirming their support for marriage as it has been understood for millennia by civilizations and religions around the world. ...

"These past few months have served as a teaching opportunity to explain to parishioners and the wider community about how and why the church views and values marriage as the union of one man and one woman."

In a statement a day earlier, Malone chastised "a group of self-described Catholics who have chosen to dissent

publicly from established Catholic doctrine on the nature of marriage as the union of one man and one woman."

Malone was writing about 140 peo-



ple whose names appeared in a newspaper ad titled "Statement of Conscience by Maine Catholics Regarding Marriage Equality." Malone wrote, "A Catholic whose conscience has been properly formed by scripture and the teachings of

the Catholic church cannot support same sex marriage."

But hundreds of Catholics disagreed with the bishop.

"It is a sad day, as the leaders of the Catholic church in Maine relish, in delight, that they have succeeded in keeping the homosexual families of Maine outside of the walls of society where they must beg to maintain their very existence, much like the lepers and blind in the Bible were kept outside the city walls in days of old," said Jack Dougherty of Eliot, Maine, a member of Catholics for Marriage Equality.

Portland attorney George Burns, who helped draft the Catholic statement on equality, said "The bishop won at a great price -- whether he cares about that price or not. He has divided his flock."

One Catholic, Pamela Starbird Bellevue of Lewiston, Maine, was removed as a lector and eucharistic minister after her pastor read an opinion piece she wrote for the local newspaper approving of same-sex marriage.

She told a rally outside the Portland cathedral Nov. 1, "I am sad but not surprised by what happened. ... The Catholic church has every right to determine who can and cannot serve as ministers in the church. I respect that. We must keep our eyes focused on the issue and that is equality for our gay and lesbian citizens."

The Catholics supporting the legislation had tried to focus on the issue of civil equality. While the church's view of sacramental marriage — with its sacred rites — is one thing, civil marriage, which is a basic human and civil right, is quite another. These groups were well aware of these nuances in their advocacy for pro marriage-equality.

Their newspaper ad said in part: "We are Catholics who are concerned that the current political campaign to repeal Maine's civil marriage equality law is at

'They are at the center of the church'

Sister encounters joy, faithfulness as chaplain to gay/lesbian group

By Thomas C. Fox
NCRonline.org
September 4, 2009

"I think the culture wars have been won," says Mercy Sr. Donna Ryan. In the 13 years she has served as chaplain to a group of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Catholics, she has seen growing acceptance of this community by society at large. "It is kind of like the church is becoming the last group in our culture to face this reality," says Ryan. HOPE, the organization she serves in the Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo., diocese, was recently asked to leave its meeting place in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, but the group carries on, she says, because its members "care about the church and they care for one another."

Ryan has worked in various ministries within the diocese, most recently as education resource coordinator at the cathedral. As the cofounder of the Center for Spirit at Work, she serves working people who wish to integrate spirituality, ethics and values in their work environments.

NCR recently spoke with Ryan about her work as chaplain to HOPE.

NCR: Tell me about your HOPE ministry.

Ryan: The diocese's ministry to gay and lesbian Catholics has been going on since the 1960s, with few tensions. At first the group was called Dignity and at one point it was told it couldn't use that name. So they simply began to call refer to themselves as "gay and lesbian Catholics." They met in different parishes. When I came to the diocese 13 years ago,

I was asked to be the group's chaplain. We invited them to the cathedral. We thought the cathedral should be an umbrella for many different ministries. Soon after the group decided to call itself HOPE. We wanted a better symbol to represent ourselves. We designed a logo and picked a scripture reading from

Romans about hope. At that time we worked very closely with the official diocesan structure. Former Bishop [Raymond] Boland was very supportive. We met regularly at the cathedral once a month and had speakers and retreats. After Bishop [Robert] Finn came



Sister of Mercy Donna Ryan

we were asked to leave the cathedral. So now we meet at a local Jesuit parish.

Why were you asked to leave the cathedral?

I'm not really sure. I think Bishop Finn has a different vision of what a cathedral should be. Perhaps he prefers that the cathedral be more doctrinally correct, whatever that means.

Did Bishop Finn feel you were not upholding certain church teachings?

At one point he met with me and encouraged me to have the group belong to a national [gay and lesbian] group called Courage. I think that group asks its members to be celibate and even to pray to change their sexual orientations. So members of our HOPE group gathered with the rector of the cathedral and we decided we would rewrite our mission statement and send it to Bishop Finn. We did, but we never got a response. So we stayed at the cathedral for two years. Just this year, however, we received a letter stating it would be bet-

ter if we no longer met at the cathedral. So we left.

How large is the group?

We have about a hundred people on our list. When we meet every month we typically have 30 or 40 people at a gathering.

What are the ages?

It's the whole spectrum. We have college-age students, although most of the colleges now have their own support

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States with more Catholics favor gay rights

By Cathy Grossman
USA Today
July 29, 2009

Want to predict which state might move next to legalize same-sex marriage? You might count Catholics. The higher their percentage of the population, the more likely the state is to... support gay rights.

This counter-intuitive finding is brought to you with a tip of two hats -- mine to Mark Silk at *Spiritual Politics* and his to Robbie Jones who led Silk to a new study soon to be published by two Columbia University political scientists.

Jeffrey Lax and Justin Phillips examined public support and resulting political policy on eight issues including marriage, housing, adoption and hate crimes.

The main thrust of the study was to examine whether there is "pro-gay bias in policy making" (the authors conclude no) or a tyranny of local majorities "in which anti-gay majorities trump minority rights" (the authors again say no).

For adoption, marriage, and civil unions, conservative state majorities can

win out. But for hate crimes, health benefits, housing protection, and job protection, there is no tyranny of the majority blocking minority rights. Indeed, here, the majority seems to favor these civil rights protections.

Silk, who heads the Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Trinity College, mashed their study with the latest statistics from the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey, which was published at Trinity. His finding:

Six of the eight states where 50 percent or more of the public supports gay marriage are the states with the highest proportion of Catholics, ranging from Rhode Island at 46 percent to New York and California at 37 percent.

Silk tosses a dig, "way to go, Bishops!" but is that a fair shot?

The bishops have campaigned long, loudly and clearly against same-sex marriage but the Catholic Church also offers a pervasive message of social justice, an umbrella many liberal Catholics stand under when they argue for marriage equality or life issues such as abortion, contraception and end-of-life decisions. †

BONDINGS

Winter 2009-10

Vol. 29, No. 4

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Bondings is a seasonal publication designed to keep our subscribers informed of issues that pertain to lesbian and gay people and the Catholic Church.

Founded in 1977, New Ways Ministry is an educational and bridge-building ministry of reconciliation between the Catholic gay and lesbian community and the institutional structures in the Roman Catholic Church.

New Ways Ministry seeks to eradicate prevalent myths and stereotypes about homosexuality and supports civil rights for lesbian and gay persons in society.

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Gays' good deeds not enough for church...

By Susan Greene

Denver Post
October 4, 2009

Jesus hung out with a crowd of day laborers. That's why the Catholic Church long has fed them, helped find them jobs and homes, and fought for their rights.

But solidarity met its limits last week when the Archdiocese of Denver broke trust with a group of day labor advocates for accepting funding from gays and lesbians. The church can't bring itself to contain its homophobia, even for an hour, to lease a banquet room to El Centro Humanitario.

El Centro is the pre-eminent group fighting for the rights of thousands of poor and vulnerable migrant workers in Denver whom the church claims to care about — and who happen overwhelmingly to be Catholic. The non-profit group left a deposit and signed a contract with the archdiocese to rent space in its His-panic ministry building for El Centro's hour-long anniversary luncheon this Friday.

But the Church wiggled out when realizing that benefactors include the Gay and Lesbian Fund for Colorado. The archdiocese singled out the Gay and Lesbian Fund among the luncheon's 10 sponsors, forbidding El Centro even from uttering the fund's name on church property. El Centro wouldn't be allowed to thank the fund for its \$3,000 donation or hang a banner or pass out a program acknowledging its sponsor-ship, the church insisted.

"We need to be very cautious about which organizations or company we partner with and allow . . . to host events at our facility," wrote Abraham Morales of the archdiocese's Hispanic Ministry. "I need to express our concern about us being associated with the sponsor of your event."

The archdiocese argues that speaking or writing about the fund on church property could be construed as "support for organizations that advocate for a homosexual lifestyle."

The more subtle implication seems to be that perfectly straight Catholics might become queer merely by eating burritos funded partially by lesbians, sitting in chairs gay men helped rent or wiping their mouths with napkins that God-knows-which-perverts pitched in for.

The fund's money is apparently too dirty, even if "the Catholic Church understands the need to reach out to and love homosexual persons," archdiocese spokes-woman Jeanette DeMelo argues. Whatever that means. The Gay and Lesbian Fund isn't feeling the love.

"Most of us live our lives believing, maybe hoping, that discrimination no longer exists," says spokesman Fred Sainz, a gay man who identifies as Catholic. "The sad reality is that it takes events such as this one to jolt you back and acknowledge that we still have a long road ahead of us."

The archdiocese's intransigence put El Centro in a bind. The group long has collaborated with the church on the common cause of helping day laborers, many of whom are regular communion takers and support the church de-

spite their meager earnings. Meantime, El Centro has lost 30 percent of its budget in the economic downturn and is relying more than ever on donations and attendance at its annual fundraiser.

Days before Friday's event, the group made the inconvenient call of moving the luncheon to a community center that doesn't require intolerance as the price of admission.

"We're not going to participate in singling out and discriminating against our gay and lesbian allies," says El Centro director Minsun Ji. "It's a pretty simple matter of principle." †

...and in response

Editor:

We are grateful to Susan Greene for her article (10/4/09) on the unacknowledged homophobia of certain members of the Denver Catholic Archdiocese. Refusing to honor a contract with El Centro Humanitario because a gay/lesbian group is co-sponsoring Friday's fundraiser is a glaring distortion of justice and an embarrassment to many Catholics. El Centro and its director Minsun Ji seem to us to be among those whom Jesus blesses because they hunger and thirst for justice.

To say, as a diocesan official did: "*We need to be very cautious about which organizations or company we partner with and allow to host events at our facility...I need to express our concern about us being associated with the sponsor of your event,*" is certainly legitimate. One must ask, however, if the same standard would be used to refuse Blackwater, Halliburton, or the local military recruiting agency from holding a luncheon at your tables?

While we are not speaking on behalf of the Loretto Community, as members we hold in common the belief that "the spirit of the poor proclaimed by the Beatitudes demands a sharing in the struggles against the evils afflicting our sisters and brothers everywhere." This appears to us to be one of those "evils."

While the Vatican is investigating the leadership of U.S. nuns for holding a more inclusive welcoming of gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in our midst, perhaps it is the Church in Denver they should be taking a closer look at.

With apologies to those hurt by the disrespect of this rigidity,

Mary Ann Coyle SL

Mary Ann Cunningham SL

Denver Post, October 6, 2009

Mary Ann Coyle, SL, is a former board member of New Ways Ministry.

Church rejects gay parents claim

By John McManus

BBCNews.com
July 20, 2009

Terry Prendergast of Marriage Care, which is partly funded by the Church, said there was no evidence children were harmed by having same-sex parents.

But the organization representing Catholic bishops said children need parental role models of both genders.

It said Mr. Prendergast, a former priest who has since married, was wrong.

Mr. Prendergast made his comments to a gathering of gay Roman Catholics in Leicester.

He told the audience at the Quest conference that same-sex families, along with single and cohabiting parents, suffered discrimination and denigration because they fell short of the Vatican's definition of what constituted a real family.

Instead, he said, they should be held up as role models and an advert for Catholicism.

Mr. Prendergast also claimed that there was no evidence to show that children of same-sex parents suffered in any way, and that the elements that made for successful child-rearing were stable relationships.

But the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales has insisted that Mr. Prendergast is wrong.

In a statement, the organization acknowledged that although it was difficult to define what a family was, the Church still believed that stability for children came from having parents of opposite genders who could provide different role models.

They said it was "inconsistent with Catholic teaching to plan or promote a notion of family from which (these elements) are deliberately excluded."

Marriage Care provides counseling and support for family relationships and marriage preparation through a network of volunteers and a telephone helpline.

It grew out of Church's pastoral response to couples who were experiencing problems in their marriage.

Many of the organization's regional centers are funded in part by donations from Catholic dioceses.

The head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, Archbishop Vincent Nichols, is a strong opponent of gay adoption, and fought an unsuccessful campaign to allow Catholic adoption charities to be exempted from equality legislation which outlawed discrimination against homosexual adoptees. †

Catholic Church gives D.C. ultimatum

By **Tim Craig and Michelle Boorstein**
Washington Post
November 11, 2009

The Catholic Archdiocese of Washington said Wednesday that it will be unable to continue the social service programs it runs for the District if the city doesn't change a proposed same-sex marriage law, a threat that could affect tens of thousands of people the church helps with adoption, homelessness and health care.

Under the bill, headed for a D.C. Council vote next month, religious organizations would not be required to perform or make space available for same-sex weddings. But they would have to obey city laws prohibiting discrimination against gay men and lesbians.

Fearful that they could be forced, among other things, to extend employee benefits to same-sex married couples, church officials said they would have no choice but to abandon their contracts with the city.

"If the city requires this, we can't do it," Susan Gibbs, spokeswoman for the archdiocese, said Wednesday. "The city is saying in order to provide social services, you need to be secular. For us, that's really a problem."

Several D.C. Council members said the Catholic Church is trying to erode the city's long-standing laws protecting gay

men and lesbians from discrimination.

The clash escalates the dispute over the same-sex marriage proposal between the council and the archdiocese, which has generally stayed out of city politics.

Catholic Charities, the church's social services arm, is one of dozens of nonprofit organizations that partner with the District. It serves 68,000 people in the city, including the one-third of Washington's homeless people who go to city-owned shelters managed by the church. City leaders said the church is not the dominant provider of any particular social service, but the church pointed out that it supplements funding for city programs with \$10 million from its own coffers.

"All of those services will be adversely impacted if the exemption language remains so narrow," Jane G. Belford, chancellor of the Washington Archdiocese, wrote to the council this week.

The church's influence seems limited. In separate interviews Wednesday, council member Mary M. Cheh (D-

Ward 3) referred to the church as "somewhat childish." Another council member, David A. Catania (I-At Large), said he would rather end the city's relationship with the church than give in to

-sex marriage law had set off a break with a major faith-based provider of social services.

The council is expected to pass the same-sex marriage bill next month, but the measure continues to face strong opposition from a number of groups that are pushing for a referendum on the issue.

The archdiocese's statement follows a vote Tuesday by the council's Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary to reject an amendment that would have allowed individuals, based on their religious beliefs, to decline to provide services for same-sex weddings.

"Let's say an individual caterer is a staunch Christian and someone wants him to do a cake with two grooms on top," said council member Yvette M. Alexander (D-Ward 6), the sponsor of the amendment. "Why can't they say, based on their religious beliefs, 'I can't do something like that'?"

After the vote, the archdiocese sent out a statement accusing the council of ignoring the right of religious freedom. Gibbs said Wednesday that without Alexander's amendment and other proposed changes, the measure has too narrow an exemption. She said religious groups that receive city funds would be required to give same-sex couples medical benefits, open adoptions to same-sex couples and rent a church hall to a support group for lesbian couples.

Peter Rosenstein of the Campaign for All D.C. Families accused the church of trying to "blackmail the city."

"The issue here is they are using public funds, and to allow people to discriminate with public money is unacceptable," Rosenstein said.

Rosenstein and other gay rights activists have strong support on the council. Council member Phil Mendelson (D-At Large), chairman of the judiciary committee, said the council "will not legislate based on threats."

"The problem with the individual exemption is anybody could discriminate based on their assertion of religious principle," Mendelson said. "There were many people back in the 1950s and '60s, during the civil rights era, that said separation of the races was ordained by God."

Catania, who said he has been the biggest supporter of Catholic Charities on the council, said he is baffled by the church's stance. From 2006 through 2008, Catania said, Catholic Charities received about \$8.2 million in city contracts, as well as several hundred thousand dollars' worth this year through his committee.

"If they find living under our laws so oppressive that they can no longer take city resources, the city will have to find an alternative partner to step in to fill the shoes," Catania said. He also said Catholic Charities was involved in only six of the 102 city-sponsored adoptions last year.

Terry Lynch, head of the Downtown Cluster of Congregations, said he did not know of any other group in the city that was making such a threat.

"I've not seen any spillover into programming. That doesn't mean it couldn't happen if [the bill] passes," he said.

Cheh said she hopes the Catholic Church will reconsider its stance.

"Are they really going to harm people because they have a philosophical disagreement with us on one issue?" Cheh asked. "I hope, in the silver light of day, when this passes, because it will pass, they will not really act on this threat." †



D.C. Councilmember Mary Cheh



D.C. Councilmember David Catania

its demands.

"They don't represent, in my mind, an indispensable component of our social services infrastructure," said Catania, the sponsor of the same-sex marriage bill and the chairman of the Health Committee.

The standoff appears to be among the harshest between a government and a faith-based group over the rights of same-sex couples. Advocates for same-sex couples said they could not immediately think of other places where a same

Abp. Wuerl's gay marriage fight challenged

By **Maureen Fiedler**
NCRonline.org
September 3, 2009

Francis DeBernardo, Executive Director of New Ways Ministry, a national Catholic ministry of justice and reconciliation for lesbian/gay Catholics and the wider church, has taken on Archbishop Donald Wuerl of Washington, DC, for his opposition to the legalization of same-sex marriage in the District of Columbia.

Archbishop Wuerl has joined forces with some Baptist African-American clergy in calling for a referendum in the District that would define marriage as "one man, one woman."

Earlier this year, the City Council of

Washington, DC voted to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other jurisdictions, and the council is planning to vote in the fall on legalizing same-sex unions in the District itself.

According to *The Washington Post*, Archbishop Wuerl sent a letter to all 300 priests of the archdiocese, and has launched his own personal campaign in the media.

In an interview, DeBernardo said, "Archbishop Wuerl is wrong in claiming that same sex unions weaken marriage. Same sex marriage will not weaken marriage; it will strengthen it because it provides protection for

relationships across the board."

"Furthermore," he said, "the vote by the DC Council earlier this year, rec-

ognizing same-sex marriages performed elsewhere, showed that Catholics and other citizens of the District of Columbia are ready for same sex marriage. It will not shake the timbers of our social structure. And many Catholics support same sex marriage as a social justice issue. Without it, in fact, many children are at risk."

He noted that the archbishop has been fairly silent on this issue until recently. "I would call on the archbishop to meet personally with gay and lesbian couples to hear about the reality of their lives," he said. †

Letter: A Catholic view of gay marriage

By **Mark Clark**
Washington Post
September 8, 2009

As one of the 580,000 Catholics in the Washington Archdiocese, I object to the suggestion by Ronald Jackson, executive director of the D.C. Catholic Conference ["Wuerl Ups Opposition to Gay Marriage," *Metro*, Sept. 2] that we are all bigots.

Many Catholics support the right of all people to marry, whether to a person of the opposite sex or to a person of the same sex.

Church authorities should stick to the governance of religious wedding ceremonies and leave to civil authorities the responsibility of granting marriage licenses, a responsibility that should be exercised without discrimination. †

The writer is a member of the board of Dignity USA, a national organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics and their families and supporters.



Archbishop Donald Wuerl

Letter: DC's battle of Church and State

By **Thomas Bower**
Washington Post
November 11, 2009

Regarding the Nov. 12 front-page article "Catholic Church gives D.C. ultimatum," about the city's proposed same-sex marriage law:

As a person who is proudly gay, Catholic and a regular reader of the Gospels, I know that Jesus Christ said his followers would feed the poor and render to Caesar what is Caesar's, but he mentioned nothing about same-sex couples. Perhaps the local hierarchy should focus more on performing works of mercy and less on denying rights to their fellow citizens.

In Spain and Canada, Massachusetts and Iowa—countries and states with strong Catholic traditions—the Catholic Church has survived the introduction of same-sex marriage. It is likely that the church will do so in the District as well. The church's same-sex teachings are not dogma, but the command to love one another is.

That the D.C. Council and mayor are poised to lend government structure to encourage stable marriages without regard to sexual orientation is a good thing and should be encouraged by the Catholic Church as it hopes to improve society. †

Catholic school downplays angst over student musical's gay characters

By Kristen Moulton
Salt Lake Tribune
October 23, 2009

Judge Memorial Catholic High's drama department raised the curtain Thursday night on the rock musical "Rent" despite criticism from some Utah Catholics and a priest offended by the play's gay characters.

The show is a tamed-down school edition of the 1990s Broadway hit about seven friends living the bohemian lifestyle in New York's East Village.

It is to run for five more shows this week and next at Judge, one of Utah's three Catholic high schools.

Sister Catherine Kamphaus, superintendent of schools in the Salt Lake City diocese, said she read the script at the request of Bishop John Wester, and she watched a dress rehearsal Tuesday.

"There is absolutely nothing that would be offensive," Kamphaus said Thursday. "It wasn't condoning the gay and lesbian lifestyle."

Rather, she said, the play shows friends forming a loving and caring community while facing AIDS and other challenges.

Wester declined to comment Thursday. Kamphaus said the bishop learned of

the show when a priest complained two weeks ago. Wester considered canceling the run, she said, but ultimately left the final decision to her.

The superintendent praised Judge's use of the play as a springboard to teach



about the Roman Catholic Church's compassion for outcasts, the sick and the hopeless.

Judge Principal Rick Bartman said the play is in keeping with the church's

outreach to people in the gay community and those with AIDS.

"Church teachings are never compromised [in the play]," Bartman said.

The school edition of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play became available

last year, and it has been controversial throughout the country. One song, "Contact," and profane language in the original were removed for the school edition.

Some schools have canceled shows. Others have refused drama teachers' requests to stage it.

Judge is the only Utah school performing the play this year, according to the company that licenses the productions.

The Rev. Erik Richtsteig, pastor of St. James the Just Catholic Church in Ogden, criticized the play on his blog this week, calling it

"morally destructive and offensive," and saying that it normalizes deviant behavior. He was at a retreat Thursday and unavailable for comment.

A number of Catholics chimed in on Richtsteig's blog. One wrote, "I am praying for the diocese of Salt Lake City. What a thing to have on its conscience as to allow this play at a supposedly Catholic school."

James Snow, campaign director for 40 Days for Life Utah, an anti-abortion group, suggested that the play's dialogue is "initiating young people into the unseemly subculture and fetishes of the homosexualist movement."

That's not so, Bartman said. "It discusses issues of homelessness, community, helping each other, helplessness and hopelessness," he added. "We felt it was a good, teachable moment for our kids."

The school's drama director, Darin Hathaway, the cast of 22 and the 12 stage technicians have been doing community service in conjunction with the play, according to the school's Web site.

Cast and crew also coordinated and planned the early October all-school prayer service during which prayers were offered for those dealing with poverty, disease and violence.

Bartman said he has had 10 phone calls and e-mails from people objecting to the play, but not one negative comment from students and parents in the Judge community. ✦

'They are at the center of the church'

Continued from page 1

groups. Most in the group are in their 40s or 50s with a few older people too.

What has your ministry taught you?

Well, first of all it is very bittersweet that the group has a need to meet separate from the rest of the organized church. Yes, there are parishes that are very welcoming. However, I think many members of the group feel more comfortable just being together and talking about their own concerns. Our HOPE group's members are longing to be full members of the church. Sacramental-wise, this is very important to them. They are loyal to the church.

Why do they feel pushed to the fringe of the church?

Frequently members of the group hear something like "You are intrinsically evil." This is very offensive to them. As a minister I do wonder. I think the beauty of our Catholic tradition is that our sacramental life involves the blessing of the ordinary with rituals and with communal support. I think that anytime two people want to make a commitment to one another, and be faithful and fruitful, and to live generous lives of service, they should be able to. I yearn for a time when we can bless them and support them. In some ways, however, we already do. The beautiful thing about our church's sacramental life is that we have a book of blessings. One of the blessings is for the blending of families. I think there is also a blessing for friendships. Sometimes we have used these prayers to bless and support couples who want to make a commitment. These are very adult people. They are not dependent upon on any particular statements by our church for their identity. But because they love the church, some of its statements have been especially hurtful.

Do you find attitudes toward the gay and lesbian community changing?

I see a gradual acceptance of that segment of the population in our culture. In fact, I think the culture wars have been won. For example, most members of this wonderful

community feel more comfortable now coming out. People realize their next door neighbor, or their dentist, or the people surrounding them are part of that community. Parents and grandparents now are proud of their daughters and sons, regardless of their sexual orientations. It is kind of like the church is becoming the last group in our culture to face this reality.

What does the HOPE group offer the wider community?

I am overwhelmed by their love and faithfulness to the church. We meet every month. I keep asking, "What other group of people would regularly spend a Sunday afternoon in a church basement?" They do it because they care about the church and they care for one another. I've found their witness very meaningful in my own life. In the end, they struggle with the same things that any couples do; to be faithful in their relationships.

How do you see yourself as a minister?

I am a chaplain and that simply means being there, together. Bishop Finn asked me once what I teach to the HOPE group. I responded that chaplains are not allowed to teach. The role of a chaplain is to be with, to support, to anoint, to offer words of comfort and to share spirituality. That really is my role. In the end, it's to be a listener.

As a listener, what are you hearing?

Frequently we will have people come who are struggling with wanting to come out to their families. I heard the pain of that. I hear the pain of people sometimes losing their jobs because of their orientation. I hear the pain of that. Then there's the inner pain of shame that often our members are struggling with, a pain that somehow has developed in their lives.

What do you mean by that?

They receive messages from society and the church that somehow they are

not normal. When you feel that year after year after year, it is often difficult to break free. So as a chaplain I deal with that. Often we have parents who come to the group. Their child is someplace else in the country and they're struggling to accept this piece of their family's life. I am so proud that we have this group for parents and children and brothers and sisters to come together. We have these conversations of acceptance.

How has your ministry changed you?

I have learned the power of accepting who you are. I have learned the

strength of living with joy -- even though you might have been pushed to the edge of society. I have been overwhelmed by the witness of the HOPE community, their faith in the church, their love of worship, and love of service.

And the lesson you'd like to share?

I have learned to respect and honor groups that somehow get pushed to the edge of the earth. Here's the insight. I've learned that because of their faithfulness, their prayer life and their witness that they are at the center of the church, not the edge of the church. Sometimes I think it's the institutional church is more on the edge. Groups like HOPE are at the center.

Gay priest heads to the altar

By Bryn Weese
The Toronto Sun
November 12, 2009

Canada's first openly gay Catholic priest wants another milestone under his robe.

Father Karl Clemens is getting married Saturday to his partner, Nick.

Clemens says he'll be the first man of the Catholic cloth to enter into a same-sex marriage in Canada, and maybe even in North America.

"I'm not doing it to start a revolution, but if people want to exercise their right, and so forth, that's terrific," he told Sun Media yesterday. "I feel very strongly about it."

"I'm leading the way, or pioneering, as it were, in something that I think is very important," Clemens said. "It's a human right."

Clemens, who's nearing 70 and retired from the Kingston diocese after serving there for 33 years, moved to Toronto more than a decade ago to work in, and advocate for, the city's gay village on Church St.

About his same-sex marriage, he's prepared for a backlash from the church and some of its followers, as he was when he came out of the closet in 2005.

"There will be Catholics who feel, because of their lack of understanding, that this is a very wrong thing and therefore will not be pleased," Clemens said. "But those are consequences we have to be willing to deal with because we feel strongly about the issue at hand, which is the right to be able to enter into same-sex marriages."

Clemens and his partner will be married Saturday afternoon in the couple's Sherbourne Street home. ✦

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www.NewWaysMinistry.org

GLBT issues ignored too often at St. Joe's

By Staff

The Hawk—St. Joseph University
October 14, 2009

You can't always see diversity.

As a college campus that struggles with a certain degree of homogeneity, Saint Joseph's University has committed itself to dealing with the issues that affect the more visible minorities on campus—racism, sexism, xenophobia, etc.

A significant percentage of St. Joe's students belong to an invisible minority, however, and are often overlooked when it comes to university efforts to eradicate discrimination. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons (GLBT) at St. Joe's aren't a clearly distinguishable group. Perhaps that's why it's been so easy for so many students and administrators to ignore the hostility that's often shown toward the GLBT community. Out of sight, out of mind tends to lead to little action.

In recent months, students at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., attempted to create an organization on campus that provided a safe space for GLBT students. By their own account, these students met with resistance from administrators and board members who claimed that there were already structures and resources in place at the college that addressed GLBT issues. Students countered that gay bashing and homophobia were prevalent concerns for GLBT students at Catholic University, and that the administration was ineffective in dealing with these incidents and issues. The students eventually created a group that did not include any direct references to homosexuality in its name: CUAllies.

Catholic University's struggle to define the role of a private college in regulating or promoting an accepting atmosphere for diversity on campus is a familiar one at St. Joe's. Despite the efforts of many students and faculty, homophobia

and discrimination against GLBT students and faculty remains a serious and often unaddressed issue at Saint Joseph's University.

While Unity Week and the periodic guest speaker succeed in addressing GLBT and diversity issues, the univer-



sity struggles in keeping these issues at the forefront during the rest of the academic year. Though many student leaders have gone through diversity training during the spring and summer, many students on campus are not aware of the

issues surrounding the gay community at St. Joe's. When it comes to homosexuality, the overall atmosphere on campus is extremely negative.

St. Joe's own Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) used to be called Students for Openness Tolerance and Pride (STOP).

The university was slow to approve a name change for the student group, though the group was finally able to change its name officially last year.

A similar story played out for Rainbow Week, the predecessor to Unity Week. When controversy started about Saint Joseph's, a Catholic university, hosting an event that featured GLBT issues, St. Joe's administrators changed the name to "Unity Week."

St. Joe's needs to bring GLBT issues to the forefront of campus consciousness. Though guest speakers are effective ways to bring new perspectives to the university, they often only reach an already interested target group. To reach every student and make them aware of the issues that are often associated with being GLBT at this university, more extensive education programs should be implemented,

both in and out of the classroom.

Freshman orientation provides a good opportunity for St. Joe's to show the incoming class that our campus values aim to be inclusive, rather than judgmental. Creating engaging, interactive presentations that provide opportunities for administrators, faculty, and students to discuss difficult issues is one way to raise awareness on campus. Including GLBT issues in General Education Program curriculum would also allow conversations to reach everyone on campus, rather than the individuals already involved.

While the name of a particular organization or campus event may not seem consequential, it is. By not allowing explicit references to homosexuality or the GLBT community, Catholic University (and St. Joe's) is excluding a substantial portion of the population from equality and recognition. The censorship of group events and titles is just another way to reinforce intolerant structures at place within society.

The acknowledgment by St. Joe's of the Gay Straight Alliance after years of being denied equal expression, is a step in the right direction. But it's only the first of many steps needed for the university to become a truly welcoming community. †

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!



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
Romeoville: Lewis University

Indiana

Notre Dame: Holy Cross College, St. Mary's College, University of Notre Dame

Iowa

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
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

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
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: Nazareth College of 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

Next Steps

Developing Catholic Lesbian/Gay Ministry

A weekend workshop/retreat for pastoral ministers, Catholic leaders, and all interested in lesbian/gay ministry

March 12-14, 2010

Techny Towers Retreat and Conference Center

Techny, Illinois (near Chicago)

This weekend of prayer, presentations, dialogue, and planning is designed to assist those seeking ways to include lesbian/gay people and issues in their home parishes, schools, or other ministerial settings.

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Local Catholics work to uphold gay marriage law

By Deborah Mcdermott
Seacoastonline.com
September 17, 2009

Even as Catholic churches throughout Maine passed the collection basket a second time last Sunday to fight the state's gay marriage law, an Eliot couple is among a small but growing number of

Catholics working in support of marriage equality.

Jack and Rose Dougherty went to St. Rafael's Church in Kittery that same Sunday, armed with petitions spearheaded by Catholics for Marriage Equality. They also put a note in the basket during the second collection stating they did not support the church's

action. Six other parishioners found them after Mass and signed the petition, said Jack Dougherty, people who "had called to offer support, and said, 'We're behind you on this. We think you're right.'"

In November, Maine residents will have an opportunity to vote to repeal the state's gay marriage law, signed by Gov. John Baldacci last June. The two major opposing organizations, pro-repeal Stand for Marriage Maine and pro-law Equality Maine, have been on the airwaves and are blitzing the state's media.

Dougherty said the Catholics in support of the law are organizing and the petition is a step in that direction.

forts to reach Underwood were unsuccessful Wednesday, but Dougherty said she's sent them to Catholics throughout the state.

Dougherty said he has also given copies to another St. Raphael's parishioner, and someone from St. Christopher Church in York.

At issue for Dougherty is what he sees as the separation between church and state, a line he feels the Portland diocese has crossed. In a bulletin to Catholics, he said, it was made clear the second collection Sunday was to support Stand for Marriage Maine. Checks were to be made out to the group.

According to published reports, Stand

Catholic bishops donate \$180,000 to defeat gay marriage in Maine

By Tim Townsend
Religion News Service
November 13, 2009

Catholic bishops and dioceses nationwide donated more than \$180,000 to defeat gay marriage in Maine last week, according to campaign finance records.

Two dioceses -- Phoenix and Philadelphia -- contributed \$50,000 each to the voters' initiative, which overturned a Maine law that would have legalized gay marriage. The dioceses of St. Louis, Newark, N.J., and Youngstown, Ohio, contributed \$10,000 each.

St. Louis Archbishop Robert Carlson said in a statement that his diocese's donation came from a "special needs" account tapped at his discretion. That account is funded by "private gifts."

By 53 percent to 47 percent, Maine voters rejected a law that Maine's Roman Catholic governor signed in May. The law would have made Maine the sixth state to allow same-sex partners to wed. Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts and Vermont allow gay marriage now. New Hampshire will in January.

The Nov. 3 ballot measure asked voters: "Do you want to reject the new law that lets same-sex couples marry and allows individuals and religious groups to refuse to perform these marriages?"

The catechism of the Roman Catholic Church calls homosexual acts "acts of grave depravity" and "intrinsically disor-

dered" because they "close the sexual act to the gift of life."

The Catholic Church led the charge to reject the new law. In the quarter leading up to the vote, 45 dioceses around the country contributed a total of \$180,550 to the effort, according to the campaign finance records. Nearly 70 percent of the dioceses contributed \$1,000 or less. Six bishops personally contributed a total of \$2,700.

According to the Portland Press Herald, the two sides of the ballot issue in Maine spent more than \$7 million.

It is illegal for tax-exempt religious organizations to participate in political campaigns for candidates, but they can "engage in advocating for or against issues and, to a limited extent, ballot initiatives or other legislative activities," according to Internal Revenue Service regulations.

It's not unusual for Catholic dioceses to support one another when ballot issues arise that relate to church teaching. In 2006, the St. Louis Archdiocese contributed \$121,000 in a failed attempt to defeat a ballot proposal protecting all forms of embryonic stem cell research allowed under federal law. On Wednesday, archdiocesan officials said other dioceses around the country contributed to that effort.

Carlson said that in June, Portland Archbishop Richard Malone asked all U.S. bishops for financial support. †



The one-page, single-spaced petition titled, "God is Love," begins: "As faithful Roman Catholics and citizens of the state of Maine, we believe that the right of every citizen to practice freedom of religion is based on the principle of respect for the dignity of each individual."

The petition states that Catholic teaching on social justice "has been central to the building of a just society," and added, "We remember that Roman Catholics were once denied civil rights ... because of our sacred rituals."

Dougherty said he was asked to gather petition signatures by Topsham resident Anne Underwood, who is spearheading the effort statewide. Ef-

for Marriage Maine campaign director Mark Mutty said the group hoped to raise \$100,000 to \$300,000 from the collection.

"There did not look like much in the basket when it went by me" at St. Rafael's, Dougherty said.

Dougherty said he will be glad to give petitions to anyone who wants to sign one. He said he's hopeful the petitions are just another sign that Maine residents are becoming more political about the repeal effort.

"The most important thing is that people get out to vote," Dougherty said. "That's my main concern — that they're aware of the issue and that they vote, one way or the other." †

Diocese gives another \$152k to gay-marriage foes

By Tux Turkel
Portland Press Herald
October 24, 2009

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland has contributed another \$152,600 to the group that's campaigning to overturn Maine's same-sex marriage law.

A campaign finance report released by the diocese Friday said the money was contributed between Oct. 1 and Oct. 20 and came from its general treasury.

The treasury is made up of unrestricted bequests, interests and dividends, said Sue Bernard, a spokeswoman for the diocese. The money doesn't come from parish collection plates or the bishop's appeal, she said.

The contribution included \$7,600 for in-kind services, chiefly two employees on leaves of absence to work on the campaign. An additional \$11,700 came from individuals who earmarked contributions for the campaign.

The money will go to the Stand for Marriage Maine political action committee, which is pushing for a "yes" vote on

Question 1 on Election Day.

Since June, the church has given a total of \$214,000 in cash and in-kind services to the effort, Bernard said.

Political action committees were preparing to release their most recent spending reports by midnight Friday.

Mark Sullivan, a spokesman for the group that supports same-sex marriage and is campaigning to retain the law, said he had no comment on the church's contribution.

As of Sept. 30, Stand for Marriage Maine had raised \$1.1 million. No one had raised \$2.7 million.

In September, the church collected \$86,000 from parishioners after a well-publicized appeal for collections at Masses.

With the hotly contested campaign coming down to its final days, Bernard said she couldn't say whether the church will provide more financial support.

"I don't know if the bishop has plans for further contributions," she said. †



Top Diocesan Contributions

Over 50 dioceses contributed to the Portland diocese to oppose marriage equality in Maine. Below are the top diocesan contributors.

\$286,000
Diocese of Portland, Maine

\$50,000
Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Diocese of Phoenix

\$10,000
Archdiocese of Newark
Archdiocese of St. Louis
Diocese of Youngstown
Diocese of Providence, RI

\$5,000
Diocese of Arlington, VA
Diocese of Rockford, IL
Diocese of Crookston, MN
Diocese of Pittsburgh, PA

Source: www.maineactionfinance.com

Catholic Church goes after straight allies of marriage equality

By Michael A. Jones

Gayrights.change.org/blog
November 01, 2009

Though it's no fun seeing same-sex marriage rights placed on a statewide ballot, one of the best things to come out of the Maine vote on marriage equality is the fact that progressive-minded Catholics are starting to speak out for the rights of gays and lesbians to marry. Through groups of "Catholics for Marriage Equality" and other venues, ordinary Catholics are speaking up in new ways arguing that love should win out over hate.

It's just too bad that the institutional Catholic Church can't let go of their anti-LGBT agenda. Maine is an interesting case study here. Despite the fact that the Bishop of Maine (Richard Malone) has had to close more than a half dozen parishes this year because of financial con-

straints, the Catholic Church in Maine has pumped out more than half a million dollars to urge Maine residents to vote for discrimination against gays and lesbians. Worse yet, Bishop Malone has said that giving equal rights to gays and lesbians is a dangerous sociological experiment and that same-sex marriage would be a threat to children.

But what's even scarier is that the Catholic Church in Maine is now punishing straight people who support the rights of gays and lesbians. Look no further than the ironically named Prince of Peace parish in Lewiston, Maine. There, a Eucharistic Minister and lector (the person who volunteers to read the weekly scriptures) was removed from her position because she said publicly that she supports the rights of gays and lesbians to get married.

The Catholic Church has had some real lows this year when it comes to

LGBT rights. From the Pope saying that LGBT people were as big a threat to the world as climate change, to the U.S. bishops prepping a document to be released later this month that will say that same-sex marriage will harm the intrinsic human dignity in every person. Add to this list now a possible witch-hunt to identify straight allies of same-sex marriage, and to remove these straight allies from any positions within the Church.

In this specific case, Pamela Starbird Beliveau, a woman who has been heterosexually married for twenty years and who has several children, wrote a column in a local paper that said people should be free to love one another, regardless of sexual orientation.

"We are all wired for relationship, and that includes intimate relationship. When any person finds that special someone, we aspire to marriage," Beliveau wrote in her local paper. "It is a noble and honorable way to live out our lives. It breaks my heart to deny any loving couple the opportunity to experience married life."

For that statement, Beliveau was told by her local pastor that she could no longer volunteer to give out Communion on Sundays, or read from the Bible during church services.

"In view of this publicly stated position of yours, I regret that you will not be eligible to exercise a public ministry in Prince of Peace Parish," wrote her church. "More specifically, that means that I have decided that you are not to serve as a reader or minister of Holy

Communion effective today..." Yeah, the letter really is that repulsive. Even more repulsive would be if the pastor resorted to this letter as the only means to communicate this to Beliveau. Failing to tell a dedicated member of the church in person would show an ultimate lack of courage.

At the heart of a move like this though is, frankly, desperation. More and more Catholics in the pews are starting to support marriage equality, and it's these straight allies that are ultimately a threat to the Church's work to oppress gays and lesbians. The actions in Lewiston, Maine can -- at their

worst -- be seen as a national statement to straight Catholics who are sympathetic to equal rights for gays and lesbians: speak out, and you too will be marginalized from the Church.

The vote in Maine is in 48 hours. This could be the first time in over 30 tries that same-sex marriage actually wins at the ballot box in the United States. That would be huge.

But it's clear that even if we win in Maine -- which is still not a certainty given varying poll numbers -- the work of changing hearts and minds continues. Pamela Starbird Beliveau should be celebrated by equality advocates for being willing to challenge an anti-LGBT structure, knowing full well that there might be consequences (which there were). If only more Catholics, and especially progressive Catholic organizations, had as much courage as her to look within their own faith and see one of the gravest examples of injustice and discrimination at play in the U.S. today. †



Pamela Starbird Beliveau

Victory over same-sex marriage comes at a high price

Continued from page 1

odds with fundamental principles of truth and charity, and with vital American traditions of separation of church and state.

"We believe that the church has a right and often the responsibility to speak out on moral and social issues, to present its views, to seek to educate its member and others. But we also believe that the church should continue to recognize that Catholics are free, indeed obligated to follow their own informed consciences on such issues."

They were upset by statements from Malone like: "It is the doctrine of the Catholic church -- not my personal opinion -- that all Catholics are obligated to oppose legal recognition of same-sex marriage."

The bishop's zeal in defeating marriage equality is "profoundly" misdirected, Burns said. The marriage law "is a civil matter."

Jesse Connolly, who managed the campaign against the referendum, tried to put an optimistic spin on the election results. "Hundreds of thousands of Maine voters stood for equality, but in the end, it wasn't enough."

"We're in this for the long haul," he said. "For next week, and next month, and next year-- until all Maine families are treated equally. Because in the end, this has always been about love and family and that will always be something worth fighting for."

Voters have rejected same-sex marriage in each of the 31 states where it has been on the ballot. Only five states currently allow same-sex marriages to be performed: Iowa, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont.

The coalition that opposed the Maine same-sex law saw the vote as a continuation of a nationwide campaign.

"The institution of marriage has been preserved in Maine and across the nation," declared Frank Schubert, a chief organizer for the winning side, Stand for Marriage Maine, quoted in the Portland Press Herald.

As in California's Proposition 8 campaign, which overturned same-sex marriage by amending the state's Constitution to ban gay marriage, the Schubert Flint

public relations firm provided messaging fire power for TV and radio ads that hammered home a traditional marriage and family theme.

Stand for Marriage also played up fears that if the law were upheld, same-sex marriage and homosexuality would be taught in Maine's public schools, even though a month ago, the state's attorney general Jane Mills said that charge was unfounded.

"I have scoured Maine laws relating to the education of its children for any reference to marriage in the public school curricula," she wrote in a legal opinion. "I have found none."

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., chairman of the U.S. bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for the Defense of Marriage, praised the Maine vote in a statement released Nov. 4.

"Marriage is an institution which precedes all others, whether political or religious. It deserves the state's reinforcement and protection," Kurtz said. "The nature of marriage is written in the truth of who we are as human persons, as man and woman," he added. "One can say it is written not merely on our hearts, but in our very bodies."

Kurtz said, "Protecting marriage affirms the permanent and exclusive love between a husband and a wife as a wonderful and incomparable good in itself which also is of great social and practical consequence. ... Sadly, the attempts to redefine marriage today ignore or reject the unique identity and gifts of man and woman. Such a dismissal only fosters confusion about what it means to be human."

In the District of Columbia, the Catholic church and other backers of traditional marriage have lobbied the city's lawmakers and rallied to urge that citizens be able to vote on a same-sex marriage bill that is now being considered by the City Council and expected to be put to a final vote by members by the end of the year.

The district's charter forbids popular votes on laws that could be seen as restricting one's rights. All district laws that are passed are subject to review by Congress. †

The Upper Room

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Catholic. Firefighter. Gay rights supporter.

Buddy Baker takes nondiscrimination ordinance personally

By Nate Rau
NashvilleCityPaper.com
August 12, 2009

Buddy and Audrey Baker cradle a photo of their son Donald, who passed away in 1995. His son's death is impacting Buddy's Metro Council nondiscrimination vote.

Buddy Baker has a message for the Metro Council members who over the course of debating the proposed nondiscrimination ordinance in recent weeks have equated being gay to being fat, or being tall, or being a Republican.

The District 20 Councilman says his colleagues who have made such claims don't know what they're talking about.

A 42-year veteran of the Nashville Fire Department and a devout Catholic, Baker has carved a reputation as a conservative Council member on social issues during his first term in office.

That's why it was surprising to some to see Baker as one of the 10 sponsors for a proposed ordinance, which would make it unlawful to discriminate against Metro workers or those seeking employment with the government on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Baker explains his support this way: "Of course, blood is thicker than water."

For Baker, the issue of updating Metro's nondiscrimination ordinance is personal. The debate surrounding the update has also recalled an array of memories, including burying his 32-year-old son Donald Baker in 1995.

"Well being in the situation I'm in, we had a son who was gay and he was mistreated sometimes," Baker said. "I really don't like things like that. Of course blood is thicker than water and I had to go in favor of family every time."

'He had a twinkle in his eyes'

Don was the sort of guy who had a "twinkle in his eyes, and you could always tell when he was about to do something mischievous," said his mother, Audrey.

"He was mischievous and he liked to joke," she said. "He was very caring."

After high school, Don made the choice to become a priest. But after one year in seminary, Don came home and told his parents he was gay.

According to Audrey, Don's strong faith made his sexuality a conflict that stayed with him until the day he died.

"If it was a choice, my son would not have been gay," Audrey said. "It wasn't something he dealt with easily. It was a very difficult struggle. And the fact that we're Catholic made it even worse. It's not a choice."

Don went on to become a copy editor at Methodist Publishing and maintained a strong bond with his family. Audrey said not much changed after Don came out — he was still a fixture at the family home, especially around holidays.

"It was something we didn't agree with at first, but he was our son and we treated him like a son," Buddy Baker said. "We would have done anything for him that we would have done for our daughter."

But in the early 1990s when AIDS awareness was in its infancy, Don contracted HIV. Audrey said when the virus manifested as AIDS and Don's health took a turn for the worse, he actually kept his sickness hidden from his parents.

He was taken to an assisted living center, where Buddy and Audrey would visit him three times a day. Eventually, he developed an infection in his brain that threatened his life. Doctors gave Don

three months to live, but he passed away just three weeks later.

"You're supposed to have your kids bury you," Buddy said. "It's not supposed to be the other way around."

Audrey said she believes Don intentionally sped up his passing by not taking his antibiotics. Audrey said Don was attempting to be unselfish by shielding his parents from the financial burden of taking care of him 24 hours per day. Don's insurance policy only provided 24-hour care for one month.

"I think that he reached a point where he chose to die," Audrey said. "I think he did it to spare us."

Death as a backdrop

It's against the backdrop of his son's tragically early passing that Baker enters the fray that is the Metro Council debate on updating the nondiscrimination ordinance. Prior to the bill's initial second reading on the Aug. 6 Council agenda, District 22 Councilman Eric Crafton filed a series of amendments to the ordinance.

Crafton's amendments, which he eventually withdrew, would have made it unlawful to discriminate against Metro workers on the basis of their weight, height, political party affiliation and status as a military veteran.

District 4 Councilman Michel Craddock equated the discrimination gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals face to the mistreatment he's received over the years because he's over weight.

Jim Gotto justified his opposition to the ordinance by stating he believes a person's sexuality is ultimately a choice. The District 12 councilman said it is a mistake to provide a protected class status based on a person's sexual orientation.

Baker said his colleagues, with whom he has been closely aligned on most Council issues the past two years,



Buddy and Audrey Baker cradle a photo of their son Donald, who passed away in 1995.

would have a different perspective if they had lived through his experiences of having a gay son die of AIDS.

"They need to go through it," Baker said. "My wife and I have been there and done that and we know what it's like for people discriminating against people like that. It's just that they need to go through what we've gone through, and then they would realize that's the reason I had to vote for it and sign on to the bill."

The bill's primary sponsor, at-large Councilwoman Megan Barry, said she was grateful for Baker's support on the bill and his willingness to share his personal experiences.

"I think that Buddy's story highlights that people have real personal and deep experiences and that gets lost in this," Barry said.

With the bill facing a second reading vote from a divided Council, Audrey said she's proud of her husband for taking a stand on the issue. Already Baker has decided to seek re-election in two years and Audrey said it's unclear what her husband's West Nashville constituents will make of his support for the ordinance.

"When Megan asked him to sign the bill, I was surprised he did because of people's attitudes they might take against him because of it," Audrey said. "Because, he has decided to run again and I don't want people to change their attitudes about him."

"But I'm proud of him. I think he's proven what a good man he is." †

Catholic church dismisses gay altar servers

Celibate man launches human rights complaint against bishop, parishioners

By Dylan C. Robertson
www.Xtra.ca
August 11, 2009

A gay altar server who was given the boot has launched a human rights complaint, seeking compensation from a Catholic bishop and 12 parishioners, who, he says, launched a smear campaign against him.

"I really thought that the vast majority of Canadians had gotten beyond these issues long ago," says Jim Corcoran. "I was somewhat taken aback and surprised to see these kinds of feelings hidden so close to the surface."

Corcoran and his partner began serving last December at St Michael the Archangel Parish in Cobourg on the invitation of the church's pastor, Allan Hood. Both were dismissed by Hood on Apr 20. According to the document of complaint filed with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, Hood was acting on instructions from Peterborough bishop Nicola De Angelis.

The dismissal was ordered after 12 of St Michael's parishioners wrote letters to De Angelis complaining about Hood over everything from sermon content to church renovations, asking he be transferred. An Apr 14 letter threatened De Angelis that the group would go public about having gay altar servers if he didn't take action.

"Now we have a couple, not from our parish, who are openly and publicly involved in a same-sex relationship serving on our altar at Sunday liturgies," reads the letter, according to a report in the *Catholic Register*. "This has to be a

grave contradiction. What message is being given here?"

Corcoran, 50, has lived with his same-sex partner for 19 years. He says he doesn't agree with same-sex marriage and that both men follow Catholic teaching that homosexuals are called to celibacy. His partner has chosen not to



involve himself in the complaint.

Corcoran launched a complaint with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal on grounds of discrimination of sexual orientation in June. He is seeking penalties of \$20,000 from each parishioner toward a charity of his choosing and that up to \$25,000 of his legal costs be covered by the Diocese of Peterborough. According to LifeSiteNews.com this is the first case related to internal governance of the Church to be accepted by the tribunal.

He has also asked to be reinstated as an altar server and for a public forum holding the group of parishioners accountable, as well as sermons and writings from the diocese on discrimination, hate and "the rights of persons with same-sex attractions to practice their faith."

Corcoran says he has not seen the letter written to the bishop, but has

heard of its contents from speaking with Hood and fellow parishioners.

"In their letters the group has tried to establish that I am married to my same-sex partner, that I am an active homosexual leading an openly homosexual lifestyle and they implied that I may be in a relationship with Father Hood," Corcoran states in his complaint.

The 12 parishioners filed a response stating that the tribunal does not have jurisdiction over church matters. They also state they were not acting out of hate, but rather out of a desire to remove Hood from his position as pastor because of the changes he made to the parish since his arrival in July 2008.

"The parishioner respondents further specifically deny the allegations that they acted 'hateful and discriminatory' toward the applicant and that they were 'spreading hateful innuendo about' the applicant," reads the July 23 filing.

Corcoran says De Angelis was trying to avoid a scandal by dismissing him from his duties but argues he should have instead confronted the parishioners about involving others in their campaign against Hood.

"Each time he gives in to this group he just emboldens their attack against their pastor," says Corcoran.

Both sides have opted for a mediation hearing, with a date likely to be set between December and February.

"I would be delighted if it could be resolved through mediation," says Corcoran. "I'm a huge believer in sitting down and talking things over with people you take issue with."

No one from the Diocese of Peterborough replied to interview requests. Hood declined to speak, citing diocesan protocol. †



Gay-friendly Catholic Parishes

Below is a partial list of known “gay-friendly” Catholic parishes. Thank you for helping us add to this growing list! If you are aware of such a parish that is known as welcoming to lesbian/gay Catholics as members and active parishioners, 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.

Alabama

Montgomery: St. Bede

Arizona

Mesa: Christ the King
Scottsdale: Franciscan Renewal Center
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
Carlesbad: St. Patrick
Claremont: Our Lady of the Assumption
El Cajon: St. Luke
Escondido: St. Timothy
Fremont: St. Joseph - Mission San Jose
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. Paul the
 Apostle
North Hollywood: Blessed Sacrament,
 St. Jane Frances de Chantal,
 St. Patrick
Oakland: Our Lady of Lourdes
Oceanside: St. Thomas More
Orange: Holy Family Cathedral,
 Koinoia
Pleasanton: Catholic Community of
 Pleasanton
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 Rafael: Church of San Rafael &
 Mission San Rafael Archangel
Santa Clara: GALA
Santa Cruz: Holy Cross
Santa Monica: St. Monica
Spring Valley: Santa Sophia
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
Genesee: St. Frances Cabrini Shrine
Highlands Ranch: Pax Christi
Littleton: Light of the World

Connecticut

Hartford: St. Patrick-St. Anthony

District of Columbia

Holy Trinity, St. Aloysius,
 St. Matthew Cathedral

Florida

Cocoa Beach: Our Savior
Ft. Lauderdale: St. Anthony,
 St. Maurice
Naples: St. John the Evangelist
St. Petersburg: Holy Cross
Tampa: Franciscan Center

Georgia

Atlanta: Shrine of the Immaculate
 Conception

Illinois

Berwyn: St. Mary of the Celle
Chicago: Immaculate Conception,
 St. Clement, St. Gertrude, St. Gregory,
 St. Peter, St. Sylvester, St. Teresa of
 Avila, St. Thomas the Apostle,
 OL of Mt. Carmel
Clarendon Hills: Notre Dame
Clarey Club Hills: St. Emeric
Evanston: St. Nicholas
Morton Grove: St. Martha
Oak Park: Ascension, St. Catherine of
 Sienna-St. Lucy
Schaumburg: St. Marcelline

Indiana

Evansville: St. Mary
Indianapolis: St. Thomas Aquinas

Iowa

Iowa City: St. Thomas More

Kentucky

Louisville: Epiphany, Cathedral of the
 Assumption, St. William

Louisiana

New Orleans: St. Augustine

Maine

Portland: Sacred Heart-St. Dominic
Saco: Most Holy Trinity

Maryland

Baltimore: Corpus Christi, St. Francis
 of Assisi, St. Matthew, St. Philip and
 James, St. Vincent dePaul
Columbia: St. John the Evangelist
Gaithersburg: St. Rose of Lima
Hagerstown: St. Ann
Severn: St. Bernadette

Massachusetts

Boston: Paulist Center, St. Anthony
 Shrine, St. Cecilia
East Longmeadow: St. Michael
Newton: St. Ignatius
Sharon: Our Lady of Sorrows
Springfield: Sacred Heart
Worcester: Holy Cross College

Michigan

Ann Arbor: St. Mary Student Parish
Detroit: St. Leo, Christ the King
Kalamazoo: Lambda Catholics
St. Ignace: St. Ignatius Loyola

Minnesota

Minneapolis: St. Frances Cabrini,
 St. Joan of Arc

Missouri

Kansas City: Guardian Angels,
 St. Francis Xavier, St. James
St. Louis: St. Cronan, St. Margaret of
 Scotland, St. Pius V

Montana

Billings: Holy Rosary

Nebraska

Omaha: Holy Family, Sacred Heart

Nevada

Las Vegas: Christ the King,
 Guardian Angel Cathedral

New Hampshire

Merrimack: St. John Neumann
Pelham: St. Patrick

New Jersey

Clifton: St. Brendan
Lawrenceville: St. Ann
Long Beach Island: St. Francis of Assisi
Trenton Falls: St. Anselm

New Mexico

Albuquerque: Holy Family,
 Shrine of St. Bernadette
Espanola: Sacred Heart of Jesus

New York

Baldwinsville: St. Augustine
Bellmore: St. Barnabas the Apostle
Bellport: Mary Immaculate
Brooklyn: St. Andrew the Apostle,
 St. Boniface, St. Athanasius,
 St. Augustine
Deer Park: Ss. Cyril and Methodius
East Islip: St. Mary
Elmira: St. Mary
Fairport: Church of the Assumption
Henrietta: Good Shepherd
Manhattan: Holy Name of Jesus,
 St. Francis Xavier, St. Paul the
 Apostle, Church of the Ascension
Melville: St. Elizabeth
Pittsford: Church of the Transfiguration
Rochester: Blessed Sacrament,
 St. Mary (Downtown), St. Monica
Syracuse: St. Andrew the Apostle,
 St. Lucy, All Saints
Utica: St. Francis DeSales
Wantaugh: St. Frances de Chantal
Westbury: St. Brigid

North Carolina

Charlotte: St. Peter
Durham: Immaculate Conception
Fayetteville: St. Patrick
Raleigh: St. Francis of Assisi

Ohio

Akron: St. Bernard
Cincinnati: St. George-St. Monica,
 St. Robert Bellarmine
Cleveland: Ascension of Our Lord,
 St. Malachi, St. Martha
Columbus: St. Thomas More Newman
 Center
Mentor: St. John Vianney
University Heights: Church of the Gesu
Westlake: St. Ladislav
Wooster: St. Mary of the Immaculate
 Conception

Oregon

Central Point: Shepherd of the Valley
Portland: Journey and Koinonia
 Catholic Community, St. Andrew,
 St. Phillip Neri, St. Vincent dePaul

Pennsylvania

Huntingdon: Most Holy Trinity
Philadelphia: Old St. Joseph,
 Old St. Mary, St. John the Evangelist,
 St. Vincent DePaul
York: St. Joseph

Rhode Island

Providence: St. Francis Chapel
Wickford: St. Bernard

Tennessee

Memphis: Cathedral of the Immaculate
 Conception

Texas

Colleyville: Good Shepherd
Dallas: Holy Trinity
Houston: St. Anne
Plano: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Virginia

Arlington: Our Lady Queen of Peace
Richmond: Cathedral of the Sacred
 Heart, Sacred Heart Parish
Roanoke: St. Gerard
Triangle: St. Francis
Virginia Beach: St. Nicholas

Washington

Pullman: Sacred Heart
Seattle: St. Benedict, Prince of Peace
 Newman Center
Tacoma: St. Leo

Wisconsin

Madison: Our Lady Queen of Peace,
 St. Benedict Center Sunday Assembly
Menomonee Falls: Good Shepherd
Milwaukee: Good Shepherd,
 Prince of Peace, Trinity-Guadalupe

Canada

Montreal: Holy Cross
Ottawa: St. Joseph
Toronto: Our Lady of Lourdes

England

London: Our Lady of the
 Assumption & St. Gregory

To add your faith community to our list, please contact New Ways Ministry at info@newwaysministry.org or call 301-277-5674.

To protect marriage, ban divorce

By Harry Kimball

www.newser.com
 December 2, 2009

If the whole point of banning gay marriage in California was to protect “traditional” marriage, shouldn’t voters go a step further and outlaw divorce, the No. 1 threat to domestic bliss? John Marcotte thinks so, and to that end the happily married—Catholic—father of two and ardent supporter of gay rights is attempting to get a divorce ban on the ballot next year. He’s even got signatures—dozens of them.

Marcotte needs 694,354 signatures by March, quite a hurdle for a campaign financed by \$12 T-shirts. But the daunting odds have not dimmed his ardor. “Since California has decided to protect traditional marriage,” he tells the AP, “I think it would be hypocritical of us not to sacrifice some of our own rights to protect traditional marriage even more.” One gay rights group gets it—“We find it quite hilarious”—but they’re not helping. Still, about 50 people showed up at a recent rally at the state Capitol, some holding signs that read, “You too can vote to take away civil rights from someone.” †

Vatican welcome to Anglicans boldest move since Reformation

By Nick Squires
Christian Science Monitor
October 20, 2009

The Vatican launched an historic initiative Tuesday to make it easier for disgruntled Anglicans worldwide to join the Roman Catholic Church. The church said the move was not a swipe at the Anglicans but it could nevertheless result in hundreds of thousands of churchgoers unhappy with openly gay and female clerics defecting to Rome.

Pope Benedict XVI gave his approval to a new framework to bring back into the fold Anglicans who oppose their church's liberal stance on gay marriage and the ordination of women priests and gay bishops while allowing them to retain some of their separate religious traditions.

The move comes nearly 500 years after Henry VIII's desire for a divorce led him to break with Rome and proclaim himself as the head of the newly formed Church of England in 1534. The framework is the Vatican's most sweeping gesture toward any schismatic church since the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century and the Thirty Years' War that followed it in the 17th century. That war ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which acknowledged the right of monarchs rather than the Vatican to determine their national faiths, prompting Pope Innocent X to declare the document "null, void, invalid, iniquitous, unjust, damnable, reprobate, inane, empty of meaning and effect for all time."

Over the centuries, relations between the various Christian faiths have improved and both Anglican and Catholic leaders were at pains on Tuesday to say that warming relations between the two churches will not be affected by the new plan. But both churches have been struggling to retain adherents in recent years, particularly in the developed world, with poorer countries their only growth spots.

Individual Anglicans have long been free to convert to Catholicism, as former British prime minister Tony Blair did after leaving office in 2007. But the so-called Apostolic Constitution will enable entire Anglican communities to transfer their allegiance en masse.

The pope was responding to "numerous requests to the Holy See from groups of Anglican clergy and faithful in various parts of the world who want to enter into full and visible communion" with the Catholic Church, Cardinal William Joseph Levada told a news conference. He is the American head of the Vatican's doctrinal body.

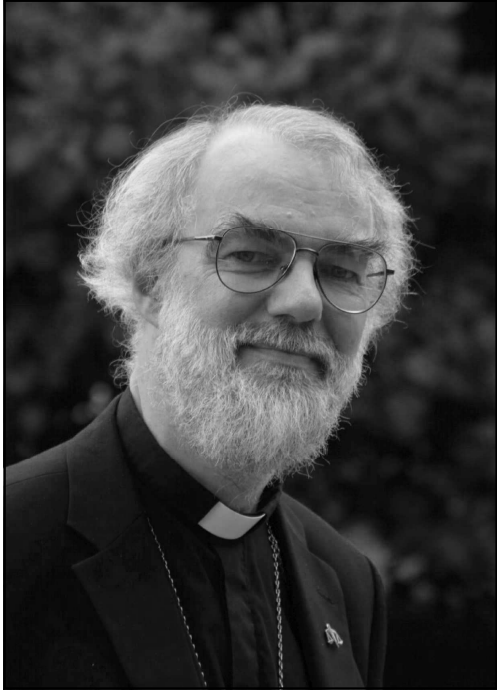
Vatican officials declined to say how many of the world's 77 million Anglicans might take the opportunity to convert to Catholicism.

The Traditional Anglican Communion, a vocal group of 400,000 conservatives who split from the Anglican Communion in 1991, are expected to move towards Rome.

"We have had requests from large groups, in the hundreds," said Cardinal

Levada. "If I had to say a number of bishops, I would say it's in the twenties or thirties."

His American colleague, Archbishop Joseph Di Noia, Secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, said after the press conference that he believed the number of bishops ready to convert was closer to 50.



Archbishop Rowan Williams

They would come from the United States, Australia, and the island nations of the Pacific, he said. Cardinal Levada was asked whether the Vatican's new policy weakened the Anglican Church's standing.

"I would not dare to make a comment on that. After the long years of the British Empire, and the work of Anglican missionaries, the Anglican Communion is a diverse and very varied worldwide communion."

Under the new constitution, married Anglican priests will be allowed to enter the Catholic Church but will not be ordained as bishops.

Will African Anglicans move?

The initiative was in response to years of lobbying by Anglicans who had become disenchanted with Anglican liberalism, a dissatisfaction which reached a crisis point in 2004 when the Episcopal Church in the United States ordained the first openly gay bishop, Gene Robinson of New Hampshire.

That move and other liberal shifts, such as a Canadian diocese's willingness to bless same-sex unions, have been fiercely opposed by more conservative Anglicans, particularly in Africa.

The new framework was announced

simultaneously in Rome and in London, where the head of the Church of England, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, said he did not see the Vatican move as "an act of aggression."

Neither was it a vote of no confidence in the Anglican Church, he said, but a sign of maturity and understanding between the two faiths.

But Vatican commentators described it as a blow to the Anglican Communion. "For people who harbor the vision of Anglican unity, this will be a great disappointment," said Vatican analyst Francis X Rocca, of the Religion

News Service.

"But it may also help to let off steam within the Anglican Church. If disaffected traditionalists leave, then they will lower the tensions over issues like gay marriage and women clergy."

Vatican expert John Allen of the National Catholic Reporter wrote in a blog post that while the opening by the Vatican had long been rumored, some Catholics feared "potentially negative repercussions in relations with the Anglican Communion — whose leadership might see it as 'poaching.'" †

Editorial: Courting Anglicans

Los Angeles Times
October 24, 2009

This week's announcement that the Roman Catholic Church will welcome disaffected Anglicans en masse is of primary interest to members of the two Christian communions. But this religious realignment is also a reminder to supporters of equality for women and gays and lesbians that they must literally preach to the converted if they are to win believers to their cause.

Pope Benedict XVI has offered the Anglicans a special status within Catholicism that will preserve their traditions and allow married Anglican priests to continue their ministry. Those likely to accept are animated by opposition to innovations including the ordination of an openly gay bishop in the United States, blessings for same-sex couples in Canada and the Church of England's decision to allow female bishops.

Not every dissatisfied Anglican will change churches. Nor will this development drown out voices within the Roman Catholic Church favoring full participation by women and homosexuals. But

Benedict's action is part of a formidable religious backlash against gay rights that isn't confined to the pulpit; witness the lobbying by some religious leaders against same-sex civil marriages.

Under the 1st Amendment, churches in this country can't be forced to alter their doctrine or to stop preaching against the supposed immorality of homosexuality. Even so, supporters of gay rights in particular -- many of them Christians -- should try to dispel the notion that belief in God is incompatible with full equality for gays and lesbians.

Now as before the pope's action, Christians can be reminded -- as they have been by both Anglican and Catholic theologians -- that Jesus said nothing about homosexuality and that church leaders, including popes, have changed their thinking over the years about everything from usury to the culpability of Jews for the Crucifixion to the desirability of religious tolerance. You don't have to be Catholic (or Anglican) to realize that society as a whole would be better off if the church's views of women and gays underwent a similar evolution. †

Toward a welcoming Catholic viewpoint on LGBT rights

By Michael A. Jones
Gayrights.change.org/blog
October 22, 2009

It's nice to be reminded that not all of the Roman Catholic Church is opposed to the inclusion and acceptance of LGBT people. That reminder today comes from a Catholic nun who has spent much of the past two decades saying that the Biblical thing to do is to welcome LGBT people into the Church.

Sister Jeannine Gramick, the founder of the LGBT-friendly New Ways Ministry, has a piece up on the Human Rights Campaign's Back Story, taking the Catholic Church to task for making such a big deal about welcoming anti-gay Anglicans who are tired of the social justice directions that the worldwide Anglican church is moving in.

"I believe we should be leading our communities toward a welcoming view, rather than creating a false sanctuary for those who fear a broader view," writes Sr. Gramick of Pope Benedict XVI's decision to appeal to elements of the Anglican Church that oppose gay rights and women's rights. "Some might say that leading the way toward expanded rights for gay individuals and increased roles for women means abandoning the Church's core principles. For many, including myself, the increased inclusion of women and lesbian/gay persons in our Church is not a desertion, but a fulfillment, of the Church's core principles because the Gospel mandates us to welcome all to the table."

Sr. Gramick hits at a core tension that seems to be emerging in the American Catholic Church. While the U.S.

Catholic Bishops and the Vatican continue to find ways to support discrimination against LGBT people -- be it in the form of donating money to ballot measures or issuing public statements that compare gay people to the threat of climate change -- most American Catholics don't find gay rights all that polarizing. Groups of Catholics for Marriage Equality are forming everywhere between Maine and California, and in many places (Rhode Island, for instance), the majority of Catholics actually favor gay rights measures like marriage equality.

Sr. Gramick delivers the message that not everyone in the Church is homophobic, and it's an important message to get out there, lest the more conservative elements dominate the religious marketplace of ideas. †

International News

Finland

Finland's Catholic bishop warns of rift with Lutherans over gay marriage

www.yle.fi
October 12, 2009

Teemu Sippo, Finland's Catholic Bishop, says the issue of gay marriage will strain relations between Finland's Catholic Church and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Sippo says he is concerned that Finland will follow the example of Sweden's Lutheran Church, which is poised to perform religious ceremonies for same-sex couples.

Sippo, whose church is known for its conservatism, says marriage is a sacrament and not just an administrative issue.

"The Catholic Church cannot bless same-sex couples. It doesn't view it as morally acceptable," says Sippo.

"Everything that happens in Sweden usually reaches Finland sooner or later."

That said, Sippo also lashes out at the custom of Helsinki city and other organisations to distribute free condoms to youths.

"Handing out condoms is like telling people to use them. I believe youths should instead be encouraged to practice abstinence," adds Sippo.

Teemu Sippo was ordained as the new Roman Catholic Bishop of the Catholic Church in Finland at Turku Cathedral last month. Teemu Sippo, aged 62, is the first Finnish-born Catholic Bishop since the Reformation.

Finland is home to only some 10,000 Catholics. The whole country forms one single diocese. †

Kenya

Priest sparks women's fury over gay debate

By Daniel Nyassy
The Daily Nation - Kenya
October 26 2009

A priest sparked off a rare debate during Sunday mass at St. Anthony Catholic cathedral when he raised the sensitive issue of marriage between two Kenyan gay men in London recently.

Fr Ambrose Muli invited the wrath of the women congregation when he suggested that the marriage between Mr Daniel Chege Gichia, 39 and Mr Charles Ngengi, 40 on October 17 in London, was a result of failure by women.

"Today as we celebrate this holy mass, I am a very, very disappointed man," said Fr Muli when he begun his sermon drawn from the Book of Mark.

The packed cathedral was immediately sent into dead silence with the congregation wondering what the priest was up to, or what had disappointed him.

Fr Muli continued, "This so called marriage between the two Kenyan men in London last week, why do you think it happened? What went wrong? What is the matter?"

This drew murmurs from the congre-

gation culminating with loud "No, no, no" from the women when the priest said, "This was because the women are no longer marriageable".

Fr Muli said men were resorting to marrying one another probably because the women had failed to provide what they should in marriage.

"Women, from the way I see it,



Daniel Gichia and Charles Ngengi

have become too complicated and unattractive in marriage. You don't provide what God intended you to give in marriage. You have frustrated the men so much leading them to trying among themselves whether they will get the joy that comes with marriage".

Women congregants could not take it lying down, they shouted back at the priest saying the problem was not with them, but with the men.

But the priests challenged them further that they had to be more Godly and "more womanly" to attract men for marriage.

"There is something very very wrong with women these days. You have failed to handle men the way you should. Men don't see anything useful in you. The job that God gave you, you have failed to do," he said.

However, the priest encouraged Christians to devote more to prayer so that the vice does not spread and destroy the family fabric which is the backbone of the church of Christ.

"Parents have a duty to bring up children in a righteous manner and lead them to God. Most of the evil manifested in an adult starts in childhood and parents contribute immensely to it," he said. †

India

Homosexuality immoral, but not criminal: religious leaders

Times of India
July 4, 2009

In the first flurry of reactions, religious leaders appeared to be slamming the de-criminalization of gay sex. But while most conservative scholars and clerics remain opposed to homosexuality as an article of faith, many say that they aren't advocating making it a criminal act as Section 377 of IPC did.

Writer and philosopher Deepak Chopra told TOI from his home in New York, "A new morality must evolve that is based on a true understanding of human nature, that is also consistent with its biology. Homosexuality has been part of the human condition for as long as human beings have existed. The Delhi High Court should be congratulated for making a decision that finally catches up with our times."

Then, while Delhi Catholic Archdiocese has described homosexuality as "unnatural", it says it has nothing against its de-criminalization. Spokesperson of Delhi Catholic Archdiocese, Father Dominic Emmanuel, told TOI, "Homosexuality is a sin — as opposed to a crime. But we believe that those who indulge in it should be treated with respect and compassion." In a newspaper article, Father Dominic was even more forthright. "It needs to be made clear that the Christian community does not (repeat it does not) treat people with homosexual tendencies as criminals. Nor does it believe that they can be regarded on par with criminals. Therefore, the church has no serious objection to the repealing of Section 377.

"The Vatican's stand on this is quite clear: Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided'," wrote Father Dominic.

Similarly, some Muslim clerics and scholars, too, favour de-criminalization of homosexuality, saying that while Islam does not permit homosexuality, this doesn't mean it should be equated with criminality.

"The Quran condemns homosexuality, but doesn't prescribe any punishment for it. It's a sin, not a crime. Sin is between Allah and the sinner, but crime concerns the entire society. So, sexual minorities should be left to their conscience. They are answerable to Allah for their act and should not be treated as criminals," said Islamic scholar Asghar Ali Engineer.

Maulana Abu Zafar Hassan Nadvi, a cleric, too accepts that since the Quran is silent on the punishment for homosexuality, it should be treated as an irreligious, immoral act. "Every non-religious act is not liable to be punished. Just as we don't pronounce death for atheists, homosexuals should be left alone until they get reformed," said Maulana Nadvi.

Some clerics maintain that since Indian state is secular, it should not press for laws guided by religions. "Why should we expect that what applies in Saudi Arabia or Iran must also apply in India in regard to punishment for homosexuality? As a religious person, I condemn homosexuality. But I don't have the right to declare homosexuals criminals," said Maulana Zaheer Abbas Rizvi, a Shia scholar and member of the All India Ulema Council. †

Ireland

Cardinal criticizes same-sex bill

News.bbc.co.uk
August 24, 2009

In a sermon, Cardinal Sean Brady said the measures would hugely change peoples' concepts of the family.

The Civil Partnership Bill, published in June, gives Irish same-sex couples recognition as partners before the law.

The director of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, Brian Sheehan, said there was a democratic consensus for the new laws.

"I understand the fears of people who are afraid that civil partnership will undermine marriages," he said.

"But I think you can see from Northern Ireland and the UK that it is in the common good for people to be making lifelong commitments and the state providing a framework for that."

Under the legislation, same-sex couples will be treated like married couples for tax and social welfare.

Dr Brady said marriage between a

man and a woman would always remain the ideal environment in which to raise children.

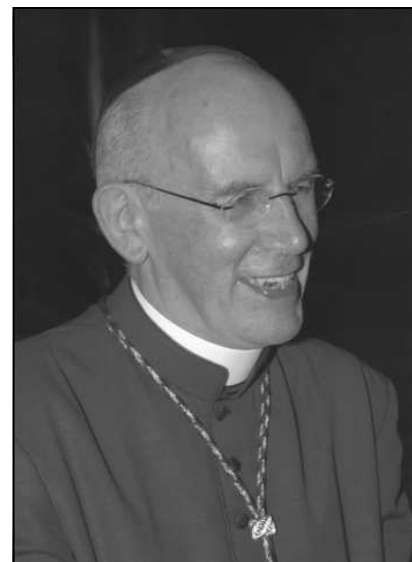
He said any government which undermines such an environment could hardly be said to be promoting the common good.

Cardinal Brady also said those who refuse to officiate at a same sex wedding would be guilty of an offence and described this as "an alarming attack on the fundamental principle of freedom of religion and conscience".

He said the bill left the door open for individuals and religious organisations to be sued for "upholding their belief that marriage is an institution exclusively for men and women".

Dr John Murray from the Catholic Iona Institute, which promotes marriage, said the cardinal was right.

"He is pointing out that marriage is fundamentally different from other kinds of loving relationships," he said. †



Cardinal Sean Brady

El Salvador

Gay marriage ban fails

The Tablet—England
October 3, 2009

El Salvador's parliament has rejected proposals to prevent same-sex couples marrying and adopting children, despite considerable lobbying and public action by religious groups. José Luis Escobar, the Archbishop of San Salvador, has suggested that opposition parties could withdraw their votes on subsequent government bills. †

Born again in Brooklyn

By Michele Madigan Somerville
Happy Days
June 27, 2009

About a decade ago, moved by a convergence of my longstanding fascination with religion and a time of great personal loss, I embarked on a search for a church and wound up a born-again Catholic. It was not a straight or untroubled path, guided as it was by both my attraction to and enmity for the Roman Catholic Church into which I was born and baptized.

Growing up Irish Catholic in New York City put me in a good position to experience the best and worst of the Church. Most of the Sisters of Charity who taught at my grade school were tyrants. In 1971 I knocked on the door of my parish rectory to inquire about becoming an altar server; I was advised that only boys could serve. Brides, said the priest, were the only females allowed on the altar. When my mother became critically ill at age 30, a Catholic priest administering last rites, refused to offer absolution when she, who had given birth to four children by age 25, refused to express contrition for taking birth control pills. People for whom I care deeply have been molested by priests.

In 1985, while working as a high school English teacher in a parochial school, I watched a 19-year student of mine weep in homeroom in response to that morning's "pro-life" announcement, which included references to "mothers who killed their own babies." I learned later that this young man's mother had terminated a pregnancy two days earlier. My gay brother, at the time of his death at 45, felt despised by the Church he had always loved.

But a radical nun was the first person to teach me anything sophisticated about poetry. The Catholic Church in New York has fed, educated and clothed more poor people than any other agency in the city. On most days a logic-defying confidence in the potential of the sacraments to deliver grace persists in me. The beauty of even ordinary churches has never failed to astonish me. While I consider the brutality of the papacy, now and throughout history, a source of shame, Roman Catholic art, often commissioned by those very same bad popes is a source of pride, and comprises a tradition in which I, as a poet, often work.

Roman Catholic, as it turned out, was the language my spirit already knew. Burning hyssop and frankincense, the stark and heart-charging splendor of Gregorian chant, Marian devotion; the iconography, the Latin *Agnus Dei* and *Litany of the Saints*, the Angelus bells, the rapture at the crux of Catholic worship have always held fierce sway with me.

As I started to experiment with religious observance, I quickly developed a sense of what I did and did not want. My aims were practical and ethereal, metaphysical and physical. I wanted to transcend, but as the mother of three toddlers, I wanted convenience, too. I craved beauty, *musica sacra*, social justice work, and maybe a whisper of ancient tongues in my ear, but I also needed a church that would embrace the realities of motherhood. If the celebrant of the mass glowered or gawked when I jammed the baby up my shirt to nurse at mass, he failed the audition and I never went back.

I liked parishes that were racially and socio-economically diverse, houses of worship that were beautiful, the presence

of women priests when I was lucky enough to encounter it. I had zero tolerance for folk masses, anti-abortion diatribes, ecclesiastical greed, rote reciters of scripture and congregants who refused to sing. (After all, as St. Augustine said, "singing is twice praying.") When people in the pews were unkind to my



generally well-mannered children, I crossed their church off my list. I preferred my homilists witty, lyrical and learned. A brilliant theologian and Dante maven who used to celebrate mass a few mornings a week in my neighborhood helped hook and reel me in. Most of all it was another — a lyrical priest I successfully hectored and charmed into serving as my *de facto* guru — who presided over my rebirth as Catholic. And so I began to regularly attend Roman Catholic mass.

You might wonder how someone like me — a feminist-progressive living in 21st-century Brooklyn — can abide the Vatican's positions. Well, I don't. I am Catholic under protest and I'm in good company. The long tradition of radical thinking is alive and well in my Church.

I recently attended an interfaith Gay Pride Celebration held in a Roman Catholic Church. One of the speakers was a former Catholic nun who left her order many years ago and is currently an Interfaith minister. She spoke of her work as a person of the cloth, her life as a lesbian, her 25 years with her beloved. The honorific "Reverend" precedes her name. She wears a Roman collar. That night, her address was filled with surprises, but only one aspect of her speech shocked me: her fervent recommendation that progressive Catholics remain in the Church — so as to be in a position to create change. She still worships in a Roman Catholic Church.

I love the radical Catholic Church. I love that there are Roman Catholic bishops sticking their necks out to ordain women. That Catholic doctrine places mighty emphasis on the role of conscience in worship and creates fertile ground for conscientious dissent. I support dramatic change as energetically as I can. I withhold my cash from the bishops and hand my diocesan appeal tender to the Woman's Ordination Conference and to SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests). I devote much time and talent to working in the Gay Ministry at my church. I recognize it is my obligation as a conscious, conscientious Catholic to discern — to know that the church no more belongs to the Vatican than it does to me. The power of the Church may rest with the College of Cardinals, but its glory rests with people like me.

Once I accepted that being Roman Catholic did not require that I be a papist — once I understood that it was possible to be simultaneously outraged by and in love with the Church — I saw the obstacles to being a practicing Catholic in a new way.

I certainly do not see religion as

essential to an ethical, spiritually rich life. I am married to an agnostic Jew and I educate our three children in two faiths, teaching them to pray, modeling what practicing a religion authentically looks like. "Getting religion" has rendered me neither righteous, nor saved. In April, as I read a *Times* report about

the efforts of Atheist Humanists to organize in South Carolina, I uttered sotto voce, "God bless them," so inspired was I by the nobility of their cause.

Religion has expanded not only how I relate to "the Divine" — by which I mean the infinite creative force beyond space and time which moves and is moved by love — but also it has expanded the way I think and feel about other faiths. The deeper in I go into my own faith, the greater my appreciation for that of others. The more confidence I gain in my own path, the more certain I am that there are many true paths.

My practice of Catholicism inspired

me to step up my efforts to educate my children about Jewish Sabbath observance and Torah, for example. When I light the candles on Friday nights, I do not do so as Jew, but I don't exactly do so as a Christian either. I do it as the mother of children of the tribe, and when I do so, I enter this ritual fully, as a soul rising to the occasion of something more infinite that the sum of all our ritualistic parts — I stretch — a soul reaching to touch the hem of the garment of the Divine.

It is through practice that I have come to believe that if there is indeed a God presiding over the End of Days, the particulars, the language and myth, various sects employ as means for understanding and revering God will wash away moot in the

flood of some unified, unifying light. Practicing provides pockets of peace, soothes me when I am terrified, enhances my appreciation of the created world, helps me to shape who I am into the woman I wish to become. When I'm lucky, practice ushers me toward glints of transcendence.

God is not verifiable, worship can never be wholly rational and men and women can never properly parse the mind of an infinite God. Devotion is built like love; it opens, and it opens up — this, in its own time. For many, religion is a fairy tale. For others, it's the most real and true thing imaginable. For me, it's usually both. †

Venezuelan Bishops Oppose Gay Marriage

By Kilian Melloy
EDGEBoston.com
Thursday Jul 16, 2009

Ten years ago, the Catholic Church so vehemently opposed the inclusion of equality language for GLBTs in a reform of Venezuela's constitution that those protections were excluded from the country's bedrock law.

Now Catholic Bishops are protesting legislation, the "Organic Law for Gender Equity and Equality," which they say would extend marriage to Venezuela's gay and lesbian families.

As a defense of their position, the bishops are pointing to the very constitution that the church prevented from including GLBT equality protections.

A July 15 article at anti-gay religious Web site *LifeSiteNews* reported that the bishops have issued a statement condemning the proposed legislation, saying, "we have well-founded reasons to affirm that within [the bill] serious violations and irreparable damage is committed against fundamental rights and structures of Venezuelan society recognized and guaranteed in our Constitution."

The bishops go on to claim that the proposed law "seriously offends rights that are consecrated and protected by our National Constitution, specifically the institutions of marriage and the family, and the superior interests of boys, girls, and adolescents... by legitimizing same-sex unions, awarding them the same juridical and patrimonial effects as those of matrimony."

The bishops offer the claim that the new law would undermine the rights of heterosexuals, declaring that gay and lesbian family equality would "render... juridically vulnerable" the rights of non-gays.

The bishops also indicate that the

proposed legislation would open the door to legal abortion in the country, writing, "It likewise ignores the constitutional protection of the right of inviolability of human life, whether through contraceptive methods or by abortion."

The site acknowledged that the President of the Committee on the Family of the Venezuelan Congress, Marelis Perez, had contradicted the claims made by the bishops, saying that the proposed law did not address either marriage equality or abortion.

However, the site claimed that the proposed legislative language included a guarantee to "the right to 'sexual and reproductive health,'" which the site labeled "a common euphemism for abortion."

The site went on to say that another passage in the bill's text suggested that gays and lesbians might win the right to conduct their own domestic and intimate personal lives as they saw fit, citing a section that spoke of the "right of every person to live a pleasurable, responsible, and freely decided sexuality and the capacity to exercise sexual orientation and identity and expressions of gender without discrimination and in conditions of equality."

The bishops, the site reported, had adopted familiar anti-family rhetoric, saying, "When the institution of matrimony and of the family, which are the pillars of a society, are threatened by social, economic, ideological, or juridical situations, the various institutions of the society must begin to move in their defense."

The bishops went on to deny that gays and lesbians and their families partake in basic human dignity, writing, "In consequence the reaction and rejection of the society is legitimate when the dignity of the human person and the rights which are inherent in him are placed in danger, such as the enjoyment of a family structure constituted by a man and a woman and their children." †