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Archbishop Joseph Naumann, who heads the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kan., is seen in this Aug. 31, 2015, photo. The archbishop also is chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities. (CNS/The Leaven/Lori Wood Habiger)

by Catholic News Service

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Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City wrote his March 15 column in The Leaven, the archdiocesan newspaper, about a Catholic school's decision not to enroll the child of a non-Catholic same-sex married couple, noting the issue has garnered local and national media attention.

"Not surprisingly, the secular media has been very negative in their portrayal of the decision" by St. Ann Catholic School in Prairie Village, he said.

"Some St. Ann parishioners, as well as many more non-parishioners from both Missouri and Kansas, have signed a petition urging me to reconsider the decision," he wrote. "I believe most petitioners and many other critics of the decision are well-intentioned. They have a genuine concern for the child and the same-sex couple.

"I share their concern for the welfare of both the child and the parents, but we disagree about the best way to treat them with both respect and compassion."

The primary purpose of the parochial schools "is to help Catholic parents form their children in the faith," the archbishop wrote.

"We assist parents to help their children to discover their God-given dignity. Our schools attempt to help students not just know about God, but actually to encounter God and experience his unique, personal love for them," he said.

"An important part of this spiritual formation is helping our students develop the virtues necessary to live a moral life," he said. "Part of this virtue formation includes cultivating chastity, helping our students understand the meaning and purpose of their sexuality."

The Catholic Church teaches its students that "the nature of marriage" is "a call to heroic, faithful, fruitful and forever love which serves as the foundation of the family," he said.

The church's upholds traditional marriage, between one man and one woman, he said, and the "foundational principles" for Christian marriage are described in "the very beginning of the Bible," in the Book of Genesis.

Even without "the benefit of biblical revelation," the same truths "are available to us through reason," the archbishop said. "Non-Christian societies and cultures have understood marriage is to be a permanent commitment between a man and a woman for their benefit and the benefit of the children born from their union."

"In a culture that celebrates same-sex marriage as cultural progress and encourages gays to be proud of their lifestyle, our church needs to uphold moral truth," Naumann said.

In his column he also noted that some critics of the school's decision have asked "why not admit a child of a same-sex couple, when there are other school parents not living in a manner consistent with Catholic moral teaching?" But, he added, "I am not sure how those posing the question know the intimate details of other parents' lives or how they propose the church should acquire such knowledge."

He also said that the "unique and permanent bond of husband and wife creates the ideal environment for the birth of a child," and children benefit from witnessing "the love of their father for their mother and vice versa" and from receiving the love of mother and father.

Children raised in single-parent homes are not "doomed to failure and unhappiness," he said, noting he was raised in a single-parent family, but these children face "additional challenges" and need additional "love and support," and Catholic schools strive to help these families, he added.

He acknowledged that the issue of same-sex attraction "hits close to home" for many, because "most of us know someone in our family or among our friends who struggles (with this)."

"We love them and desire what is best for them. It is very important to note that experiencing same-sex attraction is not sinful," the archbishop said. "In fact, some of the most virtuous people I know are individuals with same-sex attraction who choose to live a chaste life."

A positive development in contemporary culture "has been to make it unacceptable to ridicule homosexuals," Naumann said. "It is offensive to God to make cruel, demeaning remarks about those made in his image, about those for whom Jesus gave his life on Calvary."

"At the heart of our Catholic faith is respect for the dignity of every human person who is created in the divine image and is of such worth in the eyes of God that Jesus gave his life on Calvary," he said.

"In the very first chapter of the Bible, we read: 'God created man in his image, in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them,'" he said. "Human beings are the masterpiece of God's creation. Among all creation, God gave human beings the freedom to choose to do his will or not."

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