Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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Recently, NCR published an article that outlined how the Indianapolis Archdiocese severed ties to a Jesuit school after the school refused to fire a gay teacher. A few days later, another Catholic school in the city fired a gay teacher after being threatened with the same result by the archdiocese. NCR readers responded to both articles. Letters are edited for length and clarity. To join the conversation, follow the rules listed below.

It seems to me the hierarchy of the church is scapegoating Catholics who are gay and married. The reason I say this, is the unequal treatment they are receiving compared to heterosexual couples. Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput also ordered the firing of a gay married couple last year at Merion Mercy Academy run by the Sisters of Mercy.



The issue for me is the selection of gay couples, without examining equally the status of those heterosexual employees who are married or living together. Until they look to see whether all married employees of the church had a sacramental marriage and, whether those previously married, divorced and remarried got the required annulments, they only further undermine their already weakened authority.

Several of our family members who do not attend Mass and were living together several years obtained a sacramental marriage without any hesitation on the part of the officiating priest or parish.

If church leaders want to enforce the "rules" then they better get busy and enforce all of them.

DONNA FRITHSEN

Marlton, New Jersey

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In response to the article "Why are Catholic schools firing gay teachers, and how can one refuse?", the title is misleading.

Gay teachers per se are not the issue; rather, the issue is teachers in a same-sex marriage.

They are not being fired; rather, the schools are being asked to not renew their contracts.

TIMOTHY J. MILLER

Austin, Texas

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I found it incomprehensible in Brebeuf Jesuit Preparatory's position that only the administration and religion teachers are ministers. This tears the heart out of Catholic education. The archdiocese is exactly right. Teachers in Catholic high schools are ministers regardless of the subjects they teach and they should not contradict Catholic principles in a public way. The word "public" is crucial. Obviously lying violates Catholic teaching and no doubt Catholics have lied. But to publish an article advocating lying as a means to an end while being a teacher in a Catholic school is unacceptable.

The Catholic Church has borne strong testimony in its teaching that marriage is sacramental and is meant to be between a man and a woman. For someone to teach in a Catholic institution who has publicly taken a stand contrary to this is scandalous and manifestly undermines the church's teaching. Yes, the gay teacher in question should follow his informed conscience. But the archbishop must follow his conscience too, which in this instance means firing the teacher.

RHETT SEGALL

Wynantskill, New York

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In the future can we expect gay priests involved in various ministries will be fired? Is that the next crisis we will face as clerical ranks are depleted? Have not the bishops far more critical issues to deal with?

Our Catholic school students need to see examples of love, kindness, justice, service, forgiveness, and compassion. Firing gay teachers will not achieve any of the

values formulated in the philosophy of Catholic education.

JEANNE KEATING

Naples, Florida

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When Cathedral High School of Indianapolis acceded to the Indianapolis Archdiocese's order to fire a teacher in a same-sex marriage, it justified its decision in part on an erroneous understanding of the law of nonprofit and tax-exempt organizations.

In a letter to the school community, Cathedral's leaders stated if the school were to be delisted as "Catholic" by the archdiocese, "Cathedral would lose its 501(c)(3) status thus rendering Cathedral unable to operate as a nonprofit school."

Separating from the archdiocese would have no impact on Cathedral's status as a nonprofit. Cathedral derives its nonprofit status from the state of Indiana, not the archdiocese or the federal government. The only people who could imperil Cathedral's nonprofit status are the school's own leaders, for example, if they started looting the school's resources for their private benefit.

Separating from the archdiocese would not affect Cathedral's eligibility for tax-exemption under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. It is true that Cathedral currently derives its tax-exempt status from the archdiocese, which obtains tax-exemption on behalf of itself and affiliated entities. This means that if Cathedral were to separate from the archdiocese, it might lose its derivative tax exemption from the archdiocese. Cathedral could simply apply for 501(c)(3) tax exempt status as a stand-alone entity, which it would receive as a matter of course.

Even if Cathedral's leaders had some valid reasons for firing teachers in same-sex marriages, fear of losing nonprofit and/or tax-exempt status is not among them.

ROBERT KATZ

Indianapolis, Indiana

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The NCR article was faithfully reported, but with one critical exception. Cathedral High School claims that their status is distinguishable from Brebeuf Jesuit because Cathedral would lose tax exempt status if they did not acquiesce to the archbishop.

However, legal and tax professionals have readily fact checked this claim and found it to be patently false. Cathedral is nearly as independent as Brebeuf because Cathedral has its own non-profit status and it is not funded by the diocese. In light of their false excuse, the position of administrators at Cathedral must be seen as deference to church authority even against their informed conscience — which led them to a public [but likely insincere] claim they fully support the teacher in question. With lies and obfuscations, Cathedral administrators are teaching a sad lesson to their students.

MARC LUXENBERG

West Hollywood, California

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I am the product of Catholic school education through college. During those years, I interacted with some caring teachers but also some who were abusive. Especially at this time of crisis in the Catholic Church, the institutional church and all Catholic individuals need to take time for some serious introspection. Unless the church is open to significant restructuring, an increasing number of people are going to turn to other sources of spiritual nourishment.

The firing of a person because she or he is gay/in a same-sex marriage is, I believe, antithetical to Jesus' teachings of inclusive love. He did not say, love your neighbor, as long as he or she's "straight."

I worked as a high school social worker for 32 years. Among my students and professional colleagues were many wonderful examples of those who follow Christ's

example of love, kindness, compassion, joy, inclusiveness and mercy — and many of those identified as LGBTQ+. It's time to assess the appropriateness of individuals for their jobs based on their character, integrity, skill set and dedication — not on whom they choose to love.

MARY KATE PACH

Summit, New Jersey

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In my opinion, "Catholic" schools have continually been a force to separate and incite divisions between and among the citizens of this country.

I would like to see all diocesan "Catholic" schools closed. Just think how much more attention would then be paid by the parishes to the children of all parishioners instead of just to those who send their kids to the parish school? And what excellent CCD there would be, as opposed to the half-baked, unprepared junk that is taught to public kids once a week.

If the Presbyterians, Methodists, Jews, Muslims, etc. all had their own schools, can you imagine how much worse the divisions would be in this country? And if those religions have all managed to teach their faiths to their children over the last 200 years without setting up isolationist schools, why can't the Catholics?

This issue of firing gay teachers is just a perfect example of how the church is perpetuating its arrogant, inhumane philosophies. It's intolerable to those of us who used to call ourselves Catholic. It is not the inclusive church that Jesus envisioned.

FRAN PIERCE

Chester Springs, Pennsylvania

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