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Wuerl's tone not so pastoral for some

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NCR Today

As the same sex marriage debate heats up in Washington, D.C., Archbishop Donald Wuerl has consistently voiced his opposition to any legislation that would grant same-sex couples full and equal protection under the law. At the same time, however, the archbishop has sought to reach out to gay and lesbian Catholics via a letter explaining that while he may reject their rights, he doesn't reject gay and lesbian people upfront.

As the comments on my fellow blogger's posting about this letter show, Archbishop Wuerl's letter has been rejected by many and reluctantly accepted by others.

Paxsjc writes, "As a lesbian Catholic who attends Mass 3-4 times a week now, I certainly don't feel alienated from the Church. I do believe, though, that the Church hierarchy is becoming further and further alienated from the people - the people in the pews as well as the people who've long left them ? I appreciate Bishop Wuerl's pastoral tone, which is a welcome change from the hostile screeds of many of his brethren. But is he truly off in search of the lost sheep??"

On NCR's Facebook page, Brandon Lanier Higson commented, "I think it's great how this bishop (and others like him) seek to bring comforting words to gay and lesbian Catholics letting us know that being against [same-sex marriage] doesn't mean the Church is against us ? However, when they do everything in their might to ensure that we are not given equal rights is sends a conflicting message and I hope the Church can someday see that and understand that actions speak louder than words.?"

These comments and others like them bring up a few important questions: Can Archbishop Wuerl's letter be considered pastoral and inviting to gay and lesbian Catholics while he is simultaneously blocking the full and equal rights of same sex couples? And even more importantly, are gay and lesbian Catholics actually comforted knowing that the church hierarchy isn't after them, only their rights?

Certainly as gay and lesbian Catholics prepare to march at this weekend's National Equality March in Washington, D.C., Archbishop Wuerl will have the opportunity to lovingly and pastorally welcome these Catholics from around the country into his diocese, or not.

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