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Minnesota Catholic school censors editorial critical of archdiocese

Joshua J. McElwee | Nov. 15, 2010 NCR Today

The administration of a Catholic high school in Minnesota has removed an editorial written by the school's newspaper which criticized the Saint Paul and Minneapolis archdiocese for engaging in "nothing more than simple, emotional propaganda" on the issue of gay marriage.

The editorial, written by the staff of the *Knight Errant*, the school newspaper of Benilde-St. Margaret?s School in St. Louis Park, Minn., takes aim at the archdiocese's recent DVD campaign, which featured a video message from Archbishop John Nienstedt calling for a "constitutional amendment clearly defining marriage as a union of one man and one woman."

The DVD was sent to over 400,000 Catholic households in the state.

In a statement on the *Knight Errant*'s Web site [1], Bob Tift, the school's president, said:

> The online comments regarding the editorial and the opinion piece in question were creating a disrespectful environment as well as confusion about the teachings of the Catholic Church; therefore, the administration exercised its prerogative to have the material removed from the website.

As the editorial is no longer accessible online, it is posted in full here: (h/t David Brauer [2])

> **Staff finds DVD unsubstantiated**
>
> The Catholic Church has been a long-standing opponent of gay marriage both in civil law and the Church itself. In keeping with this teaching, Archbishop Nienstedt produced and mailed a DVD in which he explicitly endorses an amendment to our state constitution that would bar homosexuals from the right to marry under civil law.
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> We as a staff believe the Church has both the right to have a teaching on this issue and to deny homosexuals the right to get married within the Church itself. However, we also feel that the DVD many of our families received is inappropriate due to the civil nature of the issue, and the content is nothing more than simple, emotional propaganda.
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> Archbishop Nienstedt states in the DVD that gay marriage poses a threat not only to the children taken out of the foster care system and adopted by married gay couples, but to children everywhere. He warns us that if we were to legalize gay marriage, the government would start teaching children in public schools that gay marriage is okay ? something that is not consistent with Catholic teachings. The DVD further equates the effects of growing up in a household with two moms or two dads to growing up in a polygamous household, or an impoverished, financially struggling, single parent home.
>
> The DVD tells us that the legalization of same-sex marriage will result in a world that no longer cares

about a one-man one-woman vision of marriage, which will in turn result in a society that is, ?callous and indifferent to the suffering it imposes on its own children, and on women who are left to carry the burden of parenting, and on men who are fundamentally dehumanized.?
How gay marriage results in heterosexual divorce and poverty, the DVD fails to address. How gay marriage leads to the acceptance of polygamy, the DVD makes no mention of either.

In the end, the DVD simply tries to equate gay marriage (an institution that would actually bring families together through the adoption of children) to broken homes and polygamy, without providing any facts to back it up. And, while the struggles of raising a child without a mother or father as support are certainly real, this stems from the fact that single parents are doing the job of two people and is not a reason to deny homosexuals the right to marry under civil law.

The DVD also aimed to reject the notion that the issue of gay marriage is an issue of civil rights. They did this in the most subtle way imaginable: by having a black man quote Martin Luther King Jr. The quote in question was from ?Letter from Birmingham Jail,? and stated that for a law to be just it must be in line with natural law.

What the speaker fails to address is the very next line of the letter that states, ?Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statues are unjust because segregation distorts the soul.? Clearly this omitted line proves that MLK would not have supported discriminatory policies against any group, including homosexuals. The fact that the Church would go as far as to evoke MLK in an issue, which he clearly wouldn?t have supported, speaks volumes to the argument which the DVD presents.

To close its argument, the DVD states that the civil recognition of same-sex marriage would be an attack on our religious liberties as Catholics; however, no law that would be passed for gay marriage would have any impact on the Church?s ability to control its own definition of marriage. The legislature is discussing granting civil liberties to homosexuals in a legal way, not a religious one.

We have been told through this DVD to defend the historical definition of marriage through our votes. Well, up until 1967 it was a historical precedent not to let two people of different races get married in 17 states. In previous centuries, married women were considered their husband?s properties. But these things have changed, and it?s time for the civil definition of marriage to change again to account for our gay brothers and sisters, not in the Church, but at least in the civil arena.

For more coverage of the Saint Paul and Minneapolis archdiocese's DVD campaign, see Nicole Sotelo's commentary, Knights, Minneapolis bishop endanger church neutrality. [3]

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