

Editorial pulled from Catholic student newspaper Web site

Zoe Ryan | Nov. 23, 2010

The administration of a St. Louis Park, Minn., Catholic prep school removed from the school's online newspaper an editorial about the Minnesota Catholic bishops' DVD education campaign on same-sex marriage and an opinion piece by a gay student because online comments about the articles created a "disrespectful environment" and "confusion about the teachings of the Catholic church," the school's president, Bob Tift, said in a statement.

The editorial and opinion piece accompanied a news article about the DVD campaign. All three articles appeared online and in the Nov. 11 print edition of *Benilde-St. Margaret's Knight Errant*. The news article remains online, but the other pieces were removed Nov. 13.

The editorial objected to the DVD campaign, which the Minnesota bishops released shortly before the November midterm elections. The 18-minute DVD was mailed to about 400,000 Minnesota Catholics and featured Archbishop John Nienstedt of St. Paul and Minneapolis explaining church teaching on same-sex marriage.

The editorial did not challenge church teaching on gay marriage, but it said, "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."

The opinion piece, written by openly gay student Sean Simonson, depicted the struggles experienced by a gay person in today's world.

The pieces caused a flurry of commenting on the Web site, much of it heated. The opinion piece had generated 93 comments, mostly supportive of the student, before being pulled.

"It's a good thing [that the articles were removed] because of all the tension being built up -- it's good to take off mean comments," *Benilde-St. Margaret's* sophomore Jarred Oftedahl told *NCR*.

Oftedahl said he didn't know about the DVD campaign and didn't think his friends did either. Reading the student newspaper was helpful in learning about the issue, he said.

Adam Bamonti, a sophomore, thought the editorial was a good thing because "it keeps you more aware of what's going on." The school newspaper's editorials usually aren't very controversial, he said. The latest editorial was asking for a change in the bathroom policy.

He said that the school is supportive of all its students, and that the atmosphere now is no more heated than it was before.

Students have created a Facebook page about the issue.

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