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Catholic group purchases full-page ads endorsing same-sex marriage

Dan Morris-Young | Oct. 26, 2012 NCR Today

Full-page advertisements purchased by Catholics for Marriage Equality Washington State supporting the right for "everyone in Washington State" to "marry the person he or she loves" will appear in three of the state's major cities on Sunday.

The group supports passage of Referendum 74, which would put into effect legislation authorizing same-sex marriage passed in February by state lawmakers.

The state's bishops and the Washington State Catholic Conference, however, have been outspoken in opposition to the referendum's passage and major players in bringing the question to voters. The vote will take place in the state's Nov. 6 general election.

Signed by more than 1,000 Catholics, the display ad also states, "Jesus and Catholic Social Teaching urge use to love all our neighbors as ourselves" and urges "Catholics ... and all citizens of Washington State" to vote for Referendum 74.

While the ad does not mention the state's Catholic bishops, a news release announcing the ad charges that "Catholic voices in favor of same-sex marriage laws are often quiet in the pews in face of the strong opposition from the pulpits, videos and publications of Catholic bishops and pastors."

"Surveys consistently show that a majority of Catholics will be voting to approve our state's marriage equality law," the release states.

According to Barbara Guzzo, the group's spokesperson, about one in 20 signers of the ad asked to be listed as anonymous or "Church worker" to avoid employment problems.

Those signers included at least two priests, Catholic school principals, church social service agency employees, women religious and parish workers, Guzzo said.

The ad is scheduled to appear in the *The Seattle Times*, the *Yakima Herald-Republic*, and *The Herald* in Everett. A similar full-page ad was run in Spokane's *The Spokesman-Review*'s Oct. 16 special section on the election. The *Seattle Gay News* will also carry the ad, Guzzo said.

The money for the newspaper displays, which cost about $30,000, was raised by individual donations "ranging from $1 to $2,500," Guzzo said.

According to a news release from the group, two "prayer, solidarity and reflection" gatherings are also planned for Sunday by backers of Referendum 74. An event is scheduled for 4 p.m. near Seattle's St. James Cathedral, followed by a candlelight vigil at 7 p.m. outside Yakima's St. Paul's Cathedral. Both events were organized by a group of "young Catholic leaders" affiliated with Catholics for Marriage Equality Washington State.

The version of the ad running in western Washington features the Kreuger family. Members of Seattle's Christ

Our Hope Parish, the Kreugers, Walt and Kathy, are quoted as saying they want their now 30-year-old twins, Kate and Michael, to have "equal marriage and justice" under state law. Kate is married. Michael is gay.

Before becoming active in the Referendum 74 campaign, Walt Kreuger said he wrote Seattle Archbishop J. Peter Sartain shortly after the prelate testified against the pending same-sex legislation in the state capital.

"I asked him not to request signatures for a referendum in the churches," Walt Kreuger said. He said Sartain responded, writing "that we are going to have to agree to disagree."

Sartain has authored multiple statements opposing same-sex marriage, stating that marriage of one man and one woman has been the consistent teaching of the church and foundational for society; that same-sex marriage would reduce the role of marital child-bearing to one of relative rather than fundamental importance; that supporters of traditional male-female marriage will be accused of discrimination if the law passes and same-sex unions are equal in law to traditional marriage.

Walt Krueger, an attorney, is among critics of the state's Catholic bishops who accuse them of "creating division within the church" by "wrongly involving the church in politics."

"We are talking civil marriage," not sacramental unions, he said, adding that "a lot of people have forgotten their history" about the importance of legal separation of church and state.

To date, he said, he and his family "have received nothing but positive" feedback for appearing in the ad and other pro-Referendum 74 materials.

Ad from Catholics for Marriage Equality Washington State [1]

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