

More to the story

Heidi Schlumpf | Nov. 19, 2012 NCR Today

"That teenager who was denied Confirmation? There's more to the story," teases Catholic blogger Deacon Greg Kandra with the headline to his [blog post](#) [1] following up on the [story](#) [2] of the 17-year-old Minnesotan allegedly denied Confirmation because of his support for same-sex marriage. Quoting [LifeSite News](#) [3], Kandra notes that the final decision to delay the sacrament was made by the 17-year-old himself, not the parish priest. Buried at the end of the article is the priest's admission that he would not have confirmed Lennon Cihak once he knew the teen's view on same-sex marriage: "You can't have people out there saying things that are so contrary to the central teaching and doctrine of the Catholic faith, and going through Confirmation,?" said Father Gary LaMoine, pastor of Assumption Church in Barnsville, Minnesota.

This morning Kandra hints at more "conspiracy": "The story that broke last week keeps widening," he writes. Turns out a second student, in support of Cihak, also delayed Confirmation, the priest said in a letter to parishioners. All of this seems to imply that the teen, not the parish, is at fault here.

Although I'm not privy to all the details in what's becoming a "he said, he said" story, it seems to me that even if the final decision was Cihak's, there was certainly some amount of pressure for him to change his views. Let's be clear, he didn't just up and decide not to get confirmed. A parish worker Google'd him, found a photo of him with a sign opposing the legislation to deny same-sex marriage and reported it to the pastor, who called the teen about it. The discovery of the gay-marriage post came suspiciously after a 2-hour meeting in which the pastor chastised Cihak's parents for their lack of church attendance and other matters.

So, while the boy may have made the decision, I think you can bet he knew he wasn't welcome.

When I was 16, I, too, struggled with some church teachings that contradicted what my conscience was telling me. I approached my pastor (that says a lot about him already, doesn't it?) and shared my concerns. He told me that waiting was definitely an option, but pointed out that the most important teachings that I needed to assent to were in the creed, which he went through line by line with me. I was confirmed the next year.

LaMoine, Catholic opponents of same-sex marriage and Kandra may feel vindicated by some of the details of this story, but I don't think it changes the gist of it. Not only did this particular teenager and his friend feel unwelcome in the church, but thousands of young people--on this issue and others--are getting the message loud and clear: This church is not for you. That's the "more to the story."

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Links:

[1] <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/deaconsbench/2012/11/that-teenager-who-was-denied-confirmation-theres-more-to-the-story/>

[2] <http://www.inforum.com/event/article/id/380452/>

[3] <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/parents-claim-minnesota-priest-denied-son-confirmation-over-gay-marriage-vi>