



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 28, 2012

Mass. Church Threatened With Violence for Stand on Marriage

A Catholic parish in Acushnet, Massachusetts, has been targeted by homosexual activists for a sign it posted taking a stand for traditional marriage. The sign, displayed on the outside message board at St. Francis Xavier Church in Acushnet, read, "Two men are friends not spouses" — a simple and direct confirmation that, in the eyes of the Church, only a man and a woman can be married.



According to the [New England Cable Network](#) (NECN), the sign, which the church displayed for only a 24-hour period, prompted a major backlash from homosexual activists and their supporters. Steve Guillotte, director of pastoral services at Saint Francis Xavier, "said the church has received a number of menacing, obscenity laced phone calls, including one threatening to burn the church down," reported NECN. "A sign describing the church's message as 'hate' was nailed to the church's fence, while additional hostile signs were laid against the fence with rainbow balloons attached to it." Guillotte explained that "I didn't calculate reaction into it because, to be honest with you, we're a Catholic institution and our responsibility is to speak out on behalf of Christ."

NECN reported that reaction by pro-homosexual individuals and groups "ranged from quiet protest to an expletive-laced voicemail message saying the church should be burned. Vanessa Raymond, a Facebook user who has posted heavily on this issue, said she left a counter-sign at the parish that everyone is welcome in this community. Meanwhile, three signs of a very different tone were found Wednesday on church property. Among other things they tell the reader to 'Pray for Death' and make a sexually derogatory reference to the Virgin Mary."

One sign declared, "You may not be welcome in this church, but all people are welcome in this community. Spread love not hate." Another woman told the local [NBC news affiliate](#): "I worry that young people who might be struggling to come out see [the church's sign] and are really negatively affected by that.... I was shocked. I felt like it was the 1940s and we were discriminating based on race and it just absolutely was appalling."

The church's pastor, Father Gerard O'Connor, found it puzzling that supporters of homosexuality would react so vehemently to his parish's exercise of free speech. "I thought we had freedom of religion, freedom of speech," he said. "Show your point of view. But why couldn't we?" He also disputed the notion that the sign expressed hatred, as some homosexual activists had charged. "It was never meant to be hateful," he said. "It was never meant to cause harm to people. Just a statement. Six words. We thought we'd get across our point of view in sort of a pithy way."

O'Connor pointed out that the Catholic Church has "always said marriage is ... a sacrament between a man and a woman.... It doesn't mean we hate you because of your sexuality.... But apparently we're hated now because we have that view." He added that "we think we have the right to express our difference of opinion in freedom without the backlash of hatred."



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The [Catholic Action League](#), a Massachusetts-based pro-family Christian group, said that the backlash against the church showed the over-the-top arrogance of those pushing the homosexual agenda. “It should be obvious to any fair-minded observer that homosexual activists have no understanding of the First Amendment, and have nothing but contempt for the religious freedom rights and moral sensibilities of Roman Catholics,” said Catholic Action League spokesman C. J. Doyle. “These threats and protests are clearly intended to intimidate Catholics into silence on the issue of same sex marriage.”

Doyle noted that the attack against St. Francis Xavier Church shows that the traditional understanding of marriage, “which for millenia was believed always and everywhere by everyone, is now demonized as hatred and bigotry.” He added that “something unheard of in the history of the planet — the idea that two persons of the same gender could contract marriage — is now treated as beyond criticism. The punitive, illiberal, and authoritarian character of the homosexual movement in this country is becoming increasingly evident.”

He warned that standing for traditional values was becoming unsafe, and called on local authorities to investigate the threats of violence against the parish’s pastors and members. “At a time when homosexual pride parades monopolize public thoroughfares with police protection, it is now unsafe to post a message upholding traditional morality on private property,” warned Doyle. “This event tells us all we need to know about the totalitarian instincts of organized homosexuality in America. What began as a so-called ‘gay rights’ movement, has become a neo-fascist enterprise dedicated to suppressing, harassing, censoring, silencing, and punishing anyone supportive of biblical morality. Attorney General Martha Coakley and Bristol County District Attorney C. Samuel Sutter should investigate the threats against Saint Francis Xavier Parish for possible prosecution as hate crimes.”



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