



Pro-Life News Service Sued by Priest, May Shut Down

A “pro-choice” Canadian priest whose views on abortion, homosexuality and contraception frequently clash with Catholic teaching is suing LifeSiteNews.com, a non-profit media service, for alleged libel and defamation. Fr. Raymond Gravel (photo, left) of Quebec, an admitted former homosexual prostitute, is seeking \$500,000 in damages — a figure that represents the pro-life news organization’s entire yearly budget and could very well force it to shut down.



Fr. Raymond Gravel

Gravel is seeking \$300,000 for the alleged attack on his reputation and the supposed “suffering” it forced him to endure, as well as \$200,000 in punitive damages for what he calls the “malicious” and “voluntary” libel by the pro-life-oriented news service. The priest credits the organization for a number of other alleged hardships, too.

“This lawsuit also comes at the same time that attacks on the free speech rights of pro-life, pro-family and Christian citizens and media have been increasing all across the West,” LifeSiteNews co-founders John-Henry Westen and Steve Jalsevac [wrote](#) in a statement announcing the lawsuit. “Even though LifeSiteNews reports have overwhelmingly reported on what Fr. Gravel himself has publicly said, he is suing us for libel.”

The co-founders explained that even in the best of times, staying afloat financially is difficult. The economic crisis has made it even harder. And battling the suit adds a “currently impossible extra financial burden,” they noted, seeking donations to help defray the costs.

“It is vitally important that LifeSiteNews win this case — not just for our sake, but for the sake of the whole movement,” they wrote. “We simply cannot let the opponents of life and family shut down one of the few media voices that upholds the right to life and the sanctity of marriage and the family.”

The [Thomas More Society](#), a non-profit pro-life law firm, has already agreed to help LifeSiteNews. But since the Society is U.S.-based and the lawsuit must be fought in Canadian courts, the news organization has been forced to pay for Canada-based legal assistance. “And as anyone who knows the first thing about lawsuits knows, legal fees can mount...fast,” the co-founders wrote.

LifeSiteNews also said it was confident about the “truthfulness and professionalism” of its reporting and that it was determined to fight and win. But: “The only way we can withstand this attack is with your help,” the organization said in its statement.

The priest responsible for the lawsuit is well known for his [controversial \(many would say, heretical\) statements](#). For example, in a 2004 radio interview, he said: “I am pro-choice and there is not a bishop on earth that will prevent me from receiving Communion, not even the Pope.” More recently, while



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on February 17, 2011

serving in Canada's Parliament in 2008, Gravel supported awarding the nation's highest civilian honor to one of Canada's [most prominent abortionists](#) — a man who illegally murdered the unborn for decades and still runs six abortion mills.

Commenting on the lawsuit, Gravel claimed that he actually agreed with church doctrine on killing the unborn. "I am against abortion but LifeSiteNews.com says always I am for abortion," Gravel [told](#) Canadian Catholic News (CCN), noting that he is opposed to the practice but doesn't believe criminalizing it is the solution. "The LifeSiteNews presents me, a priest, as pro-abortion." Gravel also complained that reports from the news service ultimately forced him to choose between politics and the priesthood.

The priest has also been widely criticized by Catholics and other advocates of traditional values. In a 2006 column for the Canadian newspaper *The Interim*, [Quebec Life Coalition](#) President Luc Gagnon wrote that, despite being a dissident priest and "almost a caricature," Gravel was frequently cited by the media regarding church affairs. "How can he defend such positions [as abortion, same-sex 'marriage,' homosexual priests, married priests, homosexuality, women priests, contraception and others] without being censored by Church authorities in Quebec?"

Speaking of an interview Gravel had conducted the year before with a gay magazine, Gagnon explained: "It was a true confession of a disturbed priest, which he would never have made in a Catholic publication ... From ages 16 to 24, he was a 'gay' prostitute in Montreal and took drugs ... At 32, he entered the seminary in a dramatic change to fulfill a childhood dream, but with no real spiritual conversion." Gagnon also noted that Gravel was not "a fan" of the Church's new Pope.

In a more recent column for *Spero News*, Mary Ann Kreitzer, founder of the Catholic Media Coalition, [blasted](#) the rebel priest as well. She referred to Gravel as "just another example of a flaming gay allowed to enter the priesthood whose dissent, according to his own words, is enabled by an unfaithful (to the Church) bishop. One can only imagine the extent of the damage he and his bishop have done to the flock." She also called him a heretic for publicly blasting Church doctrine on abortion, contraception, homosexuality, married priests, and more.

On the lawsuit, Kreitzer noted that "Canada is so loony the courts may take this madman seriously." She urged readers to help defend LifeSiteNews against the attack, noting that the suit was likely to be expensive. "Pray for Fr. Gravel and pray for our poor Church. With shepherds like him and his bishop, we need prayer (and exorcism) more than ever!" Kreitzer concluded.

The preliminary hearing in the case is [set](#) for Thursday, February 17, in Joliette, Quebec. In a statement filed with the court, Gravel [said](#) that in his 25 years as a priest, he has always been faithful to the Church despite having expressed his personal opinions on occasion. LifeSiteNews, meanwhile, asserts that it never meant any harm and was merely reporting the truth.

"As we've said on the website, we bear no hatred or ill will towards Father Gravel. We're concerned for him in that he is a Catholic priest and should be upholding the teachings of the Church and yet he has fought against Cardinal Ouellet and the Vatican on issues of the right to life and homosexuality," LifeSiteNews Editor-in-Chief John-Henry Westen told the *B.C. Catholic*, defending the term "pro-abortion" to describe people who claim to be opposed to abortion while also supporting its legality.

[LifeSiteNews](#), founded in 1997, is incorporated as a non-profit in both the U.S. and Canada. It aims to provide accurate information on issues of life, culture, family, and other related topics.



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