

Dear Bishop Morlino,

We Catholic families of the Madison Diocese want to publicly express our disagreement with your position statement published in the Catholic Herald, in which you equated the right of a loving gay couple to enjoy the legal benefits of a civil union similar to marriage with a "satanic plan to destroy family life.. and our country from within." To be blunt, we believe your position is dangerous and wrong. Wrong on proper Christian teaching and wrong on a logic that states "purifying the culture in the United States" require denying basic civil rights to those who honor Christ's teaching to create love, stability and peace in our communities. We believe your pronouncements have lent assistance to regressive politicians whose political agenda includes gay-bashing and the politics of hate and division. For that reason, we needed to speak out.

We believe you have done a great disservice to the Church and the mission of Christ by issuing such an incendiary call to arms. Equating a vote to pass a constitutional amendment, which for the first time in history would deny rights to minorities in our constitution, rather than protect them, with a 'holy battle' is reminiscent of the crusader mentality that brought shame to our Church so long ago. There is no scriptural or logical basis for asserting that granting loving gay couples the basic civil protections and legal benefits of a committed union will result in any straight couple's marriage, or the broader institution of marriage, threatened? We believe the single most destructive force in family life is the breakup of marriage, which leaves kids fatherless and single mothers struggling. Because you and others are not looking at our gay brothers and sisters as fellow creations of God, who have all the same dreams and needs of the rest of us, it remains easier to talk about them in generalities, reflexive prejudices and out-of-context biblical citations.

Jesus told us the most important of his teachings was to "love one another" with tolerance and understanding being fundamental to the Christian way of life. Therefore, we believe our Christian faith requires us to stand up for the rights of those who choose commitment over convenience, love over prejudice, and family stability over selfishness. While the Church may nonetheless see fit to resist the idea of "gay marriage," it cannot justify supporting that part of the proposed constitutional amendment that also imposes a restrictive and punitive ban that forever precludes extending basic civil rights to the committed union of both straight and gay couples. Such a ban runs contrary to Church teaching that requires us as Christians to engage in a constant process of discernment and understanding of the problems and needs of our fellow citizens. A ban closes the door forever and in our judgment removes from future generations, that hopefully are smarter and more compassionate than us, the opportunity to evolve on this issue.

Unfortunately, by equating civil rights for committed gays to the end of "a godly decent culture", by claiming their pursuit of basic civil rights "would destroy everything that is truly human" and by issuing the siren call for a "spiritual battle for Jesus Christ," you, Bishop Morlino, have done more than bash gays—you have dehumanized them. You have equated their longing for human and civil dignity to a satanic plan, and you have seriously misled your flock. Most importantly, you have betrayed the teachings of Jesus, the Original Radical, Feminist and Preacher of love and acceptance. It is a shame that you then put our fundamental American value of freedom of religion at risk by telling our government that it "has an obligation to help us [Christians] live according to [your] reason." You are correct that "history will prove you wrong" one day.

Someday, history will look back on Wisconsin as either a State of progressive, Christian values that supported civil rights for all, OR it will be viewed as one of many unfortunate States whose electorate succumbed to small-minded bigotry and fear. We think Wisconsinites learned a lesson from the McCarthy era and we are confident we will do the next right thing on this important issue by voting NO in November on the marriage and civil union ban.

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