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Justices sidestep Catholics' case against Frisco

Daniel Burke Religion News Service | May. 4, 2011

WASHINGTON -- The Supreme Court on Monday declined to hear a Catholic group?s appeal accusing San Francisco supervisors of violating the Constitution when they disparaged the Catholic Church?s opposition to gay adoptions.

The refusal lets stand last year?s ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that said the New York-based Catholic League had failed to prove that the San Francisco Board of Supervisors? resolution applies to them in a ?direct and concrete manner.?

As usual, the Supreme Court did not comment on its refusal to hear the appeal, but Catholic League President Bill Donohue said his suit was still successful in some ways.

?While we lost in terms of implanting a legal marker, I do think a cultural marker has been made,? he said. ?We haven?t seen the same kind of vitriol directed at the Catholic Church. A message has been sent.?

In 2006, San Francisco supervisors passed a resolution calling on the local archdiocese and its charitable programs to allow same-sex couples to adopt children.

The nonbinding resolution called it ?an insult to all San Franciscans when a foreign country, like the Vatican, meddles with and attempts to negatively influence this great city?s existing and established customs and traditions.?

The resolution also strongly denounced Cardinal William Levada?s statement that allowing gay couples to adopt would mean ?doing violence to these children.?

Donohue said he would not have brought suit if the supervisors had simply said they disagree with the Catholic Church. ?But they had to go that extra step. The language they used was hateful. We think they crossed a line.?

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