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Gay Catholic challenges Dolan to debate marriage

Brian Roewe | Dec. 7, 2011

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In this 2005 file photo, Joe Murray, wearing a rainbow-colored sash, is denied Communion during Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington. (CNS/Bob Roller)

Catholic gay rights advocate Joe Murray has challenged Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York to a debate on gay marriage.

Murray is the executive director of the Rainbow Sash Movement, which advocates for acceptance of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics within the church.

Through a post issued Wednesday [1] on Rainbow Sash?s blog, its board of directors state that Murray has challenged Dolan, president of the U.S. Catholic bishops? conference, ?to meet him in the public square at any Catholic university in the United States to debate gay marriage. Such a debate will not only be informative, but could highlight reason over homophobia.?

?? [Dolan] seeks to shield Catholic bishops from transparency and accountability. Many lay Catholics have been exploited financially as well as spiritually in [the bishops] rush to deny GLBT people the right to marry, this money should have been used to help the poor rather than to promote a political agenda of discrimination that is not rooted in Catholic tradition.?

The archdiocese is aware of the debate request, but appears unlikely to accept.

?You don?t invite someone to dialogue by resorting to cheap ad hominem attacks on the person with whom you wish to debate and posting that invitation on a blog,? said Kate Monaghan, assistant communications director for the New York archdiocese.

?The movement states that it is interested in ?a mature exchange of ideas? but by employing the following, stating that Archbishop Dolan is an ?accomplice? in ?soul murder,? ?more comfortable taking cheap shots from his ivory tower,? ?lacks courage? and will likely meet the request with ?arrogance,? you run contrary to the very nature of your appeal for civil, respectful dialogue.?

The Rainbow Sash movement began in 1998 in Australia, where 70 people wearing rainbow sashes attended Mass at St. Peter?s Cathedral, in Melbourne. Since then, the group has extended into U.S. cities, including New York, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Chicago and Los Angeles.

The wearing of rainbow sashes to Mass has become the group?s signature protest. Bishops and pastors in many U.S. dioceses have denied the Eucharist to people who present themselves at Communion wearing a rainbow sash, because they said, the act politicizes the Eucharist and is a break with church teachings.

In September, Dolan and Bishop William Lori, of the Bridgeport, Conn., diocese, issued a joint statement expressing concern that a series of conferences at four universities [2] ? two of them Catholic ? would encourage dissent from the church?s teachings on human sexuality.

The presidents of the two Catholic schools, Fordham University and Fairfield University, assured Dolan and Lori that the intent of the conferences, titled ?More than a Monologue,? was to generate dialogue, not dissent.

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[1] http://rainbowsashmovement.wordpress.com/
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