NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Washington churches told not to collect funds for gay marriage fight

Tracy Simmons Religion News Service | Aug. 30, 2012

SPOKANE, Wash. -- Churches in Washington state are being reminded that collecting money for a political cause is not OK -- including a high-stakes ballot battle over gay marriage.

The state's Public Disclosure Commission recently learned that Roman Catholic Bishop Joseph Tyson of Yakima sent a letter to pastors in 41 parishes asking them to take up a special collection for Preserve Marriage Washington, the group that is trying to overturn the state's same-sex marriage law.

A formal complaint, however, was not filed. Lori Anderson, communication and training officer for the state commission, said the reminder was merely precautionary.

"There's been no formal action. There's no story here. Preserve Marriage Washington and our partners have done everything within full compliance of the law," said PMW Deputy Campaign Director Chris Plante.

Anderson explained that any organization -- religious or not -- cannot serve as an intermediary for a contribution, though it can freely promote a campaign.

"Churches can distribute the envelopes and encourage parishioners to use them, but they can't be the middleman," she said, adding that individual contributors have to send the donations in themselves, or someone from the campaign has to be on hand to collect the money.

Plante said the Catholic dioceses of Yakima and Spokane will distribute pre-addressed remittance envelopes in September, which will then be collected by PMW volunteers. A date for the collection has not yet been determined.

"The Catholic Church, during the month of September, plans to up its teachings on marriage and on our understanding that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman based on natural law, the Scriptures and our traditions," said Msgr. Robert Siler, chief of staff and chancellor for Yakima diocese.

"We don't takes sides for or against candidates, but we do speak out against other issues. The Preserve Marriage Washington campaign aligns with our teachings, so we have no problem supporting it."

PMW has raised $471,000 for its campaign to overturn the February law that legalized same-sex marriage in the state.

Washington United for Marriage, which supports Referendum 74 to retain the law, has raised more than $6 million.

The issue will go to voters in November.

[Tracy Simmons is the editor of SpokaneFAVS.com]

Source URL (retrieved on *12/22/2013 - 06:50*): http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/washington-churches-told-not-collect-funds-gay-marriage-fight